'Tis Pity She's a Whore Study Guide

'Tis Pity She's a Whore by John Ford

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Introduction

First published in 1633, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* is perhaps the most popular and frequently performed play by John Ford, whom many scholars consider the last major dramatist of the English renaissance.

As a dramatist, Ford faced a difficult challenge. He wrote *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* during the reign of King Charles (hence the term "Carolinian") and worked to entertain audiences who had grown up on some of the greatest plays in the English language, those of Jonson, Marlowe, and Shakespeare, among others. According to some critics, since audiences thought they had already seen everything, it was incumbent on Ford to try to show them something they had not seen. This in part accounts for the extreme behavior we see in the characters in Ford's plays.

'Tis Pity She's a Whore tells the tale of an incestuous love between Giovanni and his sister Annabella that ends in disaster and death. Set in Parma, Italy, the story takes place against a background of lust, vengeance, and greed that serves as a critique of contemporary culture and morality.

Ford's interest in aberrant psychology figures prominently in many of his plays. Influenced by the renaissance psychology of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy,* Ford created characters with powerful emotions, strong intellects, and unbridled appetites.

Critics have noticed the parallels between Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet:* both plays feature young lovers, forbidden love, a meddling nurse and friar, and a tragic ending□though Ford's incestuous lovers added an extra twist not found in Shakespeare's play. While some scholars criticize the violence in Ford's plays as excessive, others praise him for realistically portraying profound□if disturbing□psychological truths.

Author Biography

John Ford, the second son of Thomas and Elizabeth Ford, was born in Ilsington, Devonshire, England, in 1586. The Fords were an old, well-to-do country family. While there is little information about Ford's early life, it is known that he attended Exeter College, Oxford, from 1601-1602. At the age of sixteen, in 1602, he was admitted to London's Middle Temple, where he studied law for several years, though there is no record of his having been called to the bar. The inns of court served as law schools as well as residences for young gentlemen, who also learned there the fine points of fashionable city and court life. During the years of Ford's residence, such major literary talents as dramatists John Marston and William Davenant, and metaphysical poet Thomas Carew were affiliated with Middle Temple. Literary scholars believe Ford circulated among them, and through them knew poet John Donne's family.

Between 1606 and 1620, Ford wrote several prose works, including *Love Triumphant* (1606), *The GoldenMean* (1613), andA *Line of Life* (1620). During his dramatic apprenticeship, he wrote and contributed to as many as eighteen plays, though seven have been lost.

Ford's period of major collaboration, from 1621 to 1625, included writings with various playwrights. He worked with Thomas Dekker on *The Fairy Knight* (1624), *The Bristow Merchant* (1624), and *The Sun's Darling* (1624). Ford, Dekker, and Rowley composed *The Witch of Edmonton,* which was produced at the Phoenix Theatre in 1621, while Ford, Dekker, Webster, and Rowley authored the now-lost *A Late Murder of the Son upon the Mother; or, Keep the Widow Waking* (1624).

Working independently, Ford wrote his major plays after 1625. He wrote for several theatrical companies, including the King's Men at the Blackfriars and the Queens' Men and Beeston's boy-company at the Phoenix.

Robert Burton's enormous *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* a Renaissance treatise detailing classical ideas about "humour" psychology, influenced Ford's first independent play, *The Lover's Melancholy* (1629). His other major dramatic works include *Love's Sacrifice* (1633), *The Broken Heart* (1633), *Perkin Warbeck* (1634), and *The Lady's Trial* (1638).

Ford's interest in aberrant psychology figures prominently in many of his plays. In general, his most successful characters evidence dignity, courage, and endurance in the face of suffering. Though Ford's plays deal with controversial themes such as incest and torture, he does so without being judgmental, neither condoning nor condemning, but rather, striving to offer an understanding of what a person experiencing such actions might think or feel.

Dating the performance history of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* proves difficult. Published in 1633, the play's title page indicated that it had been "Acted by the Queenes's Maiesties Seruants, at The Phoenix in Drury- Lane." Quite logically, then, critics believe the play to be performed after the founding of the Queens' company in 1626 and before its

publication in 1633. Though published late in Ford's career, however, some critics believe it may be the first play he wrote alone.

The details surrounding Ford's death remain unknown, though most critics believe he died shortly after the 1639 publication of *The Lady's Trial.*

Plot Summary

Act I, scene i

The Friar and Giovanni discuss Giovanni's incestuous love for his sister, Annabella. The friar, formerly Giovanni's teacher when he studied at the university of Bologna, warns him of the seriousness of his sin, but Giovanni claims his passion remains beyond his control. The Friar believes that Giovanni, a good student of logic, uses logic to prove something sinful to be virtuous. The friar warns him that others who used logic "to prove / There was no God ... / Discover'd ... the nearest way to hell."

When Giovanni begs for his advice, the Friar urges him to fast and pray, which Giovanni agrees to try, though it fails to rid him of his incestuous love. He believes himself fated to love his sister and to pursue her love.

Act I, scene ii

Grimaldi and Soranzo are both wooing Annabella. Soranzo believes that Grimaldi is speaking badly about him to their mutual love. For this reason, he urges his servant, Vasques, to insult Grimaldi and pick a fight. Grimaldi refuses, recognizing the dishonor of dueling with someone of a lower social class, but Vasques presses his case and a duel ensues. As Vasques bests Grimaldi, Florio and Donado break up the fight. Soranzo explains his grievance against Grimaldi, all of which Annabella and Putana, her tutoress, witness. They compare Annabella's various suitors, and Putana indicates she prefers Soranzo, though Annabella reveals no preference.

Bergetto, Donado's foolish nephew, and his servant Poggio enter, and it is revealed that Bergetto too seeks Annabella's hand. The scene ends as Giovanni enters and, after a soliloquy which reveals his incestuous infatuation, confesses his love to his sister Annabella. She replies that she loves him too, saying "Love me or kill me, brother" and they go off to consummate their incestuous relationship.

Act I, scene iii

Florio, Annabella's father, discusses with Donado, Bergetto's uncle, Annabella's possible marriage with the foolish Bergetto. Florio looks favorably on Bergetto's money but admits the choice lies with Annabella, saying "My care is how to match her to her liking." After Florio leaves, Bergetto and his servant Poggio enter, talking nonsense about a magical mill and strange horse. Bergetto's gullibility is revealed when he explains that he believes this nonsense to be true, because the barber swore so. Florio has sent Bergetto off to woo Annabella, but instead of winning her love, Bergetto shows himself to be a fool. Florio suggests he will write a love letter from Bergetto to Annabella, sending it along with a jewel.

Act II, scene i

Giovanni and Annabella, having made love, enter as though coming from their chamber. Giovanni discusses her possible marriage, while she replies that "all suitors seem to my eyes hateful." He leaves and Putana enters. When Annabella confesses her incest with Giovanni, Putana condones it, explaining that "if a young wench feel the fit upon her, let her take anybody, father or brother, all is one."

Florio enters with Richardetto and his niece Philotis, who carries a lute. Richardetto pretends to be a doctor from Padua because he suspects his wife Hippolita of being unfaithful□she has been conducting an affair with Soranzo. Richardetto sent word of his death, then returned in disguise to witness his wife's behavior; the reason for Richardetto's disguise is not disclosed in this scene, however. He introduces his niece to Annabella, who leaves to have a conference with Florio, her father.

Act II, scene ii

Soranzo enters, reading a book about love and pondering his affection for Annabella. Hippolita, Richardetto's wife, and Vasques enter. Soranzo breaks off his affair with Hippolita. While her husband lived, Soranzo promised that in the event of her husband's death, he would marry Hippolita. Now, however, hearing reports of Richardetto's death, Soranzo reneges on his vow. Furious, Hippolita offers to reward Vasques financially and sexually if he helps her take her revenge on Soranzo. The servant pretends to agree.

Act II, scene iii

Richardetto explains to his niece Philotis that he has disguised himself as a doctor to discover his "wanton" unfaithful wife Hippolita's "lascivious riots" with Soranzo.

After Philotis leaves, Grimaldi tells Richardetto of his love for Annabella, and Richardetto informs him that Soranzo stands in his way. Richardetto, pretending to be a doctor, offers to supply poison to help Grimaldi kill his rival, an action that would also serve Richardetto's vengeful feelings toward Soranzo.

Act II, scene iv

Donado, Bergetto, and Poggio enter, discussing the love letter designed to help Bergetto win Annabella's love. Bergetto, however, insists not only on writing his own letter, but also reading it to Annabella. Donado forbids this, and Bergetto and Poggio go off to see the fantastic horse which the barber described to him earlier.

Act II, scene v

The Friar listens to Giovanni's confession of incest with his sister and tells him his actions threaten "eternal slaughter" (damnation). Giovanni wittily misuses logic in an argument that proves his incestuous love to be virtuous. The Friar condemns his former student's misuse of reason, and urges Giovanni to persuade his sister to marry another man. When Giovanni refuses, the Friar asks permission to talk with Annabella and, if he cannot convince her of the sinfulness of her relationship, at least to hear her confession.

Act II, scene vi

Donado hands Annabella a letter, with a jewel enclosed, which he has written, though the letter appears to be from his foolish nephew Bergetto. Annabella refuses the jewel, but Donado urges her to accept it; she then refuses the proposal of matrimony. She indicates that she gave Giovanni the ring her dead mother intended as a gift for her husband.

Bergetto and Poggio enter. Bergetto explains how he was beaten in a fight, aided by the "doctor" Richardetto, and flirted with by his niece Philotis. When Donado informs Bergetto that Annabella has refused him, he says, "what care I for that? I can have wenches enough in Parma for half-a-crown apiece."

Donado, Bergetto, and Poggio exit as Giovanni enters. Florio explains his pleasure that Annabella has refused Bergetto, as Florio prefers Soranzo. Left alone, Giovanni, jealous, orders Annabella to return Bergetto's jewel.

Act III, scenes i-iii

Bergetto tells Poggio that he will woo Richardetto's niece and "beget a race of wise men and constables."

Florio offers Annabella to Soranzo, encouraging their marriage. Soranzo swears he loves Annabella, but she says she loves another, "as the fates infer." She prefers to remain unmarried, but she promises that if she does marry, it will be to Soranzo. Annabella swoons and Florio sends for a doctor.

Putana tells Giovanni that Annabella's not sick, but pregnant with his child and experiencing morning sickness. To protect her virtuous reputation, she must be kept from the doctor.

Act III, scenes iv-v

The "doctor" Richardetto pretends Annabella's sickness is due to eating melons, but Florio knows what he implies when he urges her marriage to Soranzo.

Giovanni brings the Friar to see Annabella, to hear her confession. Florio urges the Friar to convince her to marry.

The "doctor" Richardetto gives Grimaldi the poison with which to kill Soranzo, who prepares to marry Annabella.

Richardetto prepares to marry Philotis to Bergetto for his money.

Act III, scenes vi-vii

The Friar meets with Annabella, describing to her the horrors of hell and urging her repentance. He tells her to break off her relationship with her brother and to marry Soranzo. She agrees. Giovanni looks on distraught as Annabella agrees to wed Soranzo.

Grimaldi enters, prepared with his poisoned rapier to murder Soranzo, when Bergetto and Philotis also enter. Grimaldi, mistaking Bergetto for Soranzo, stabs him fatally.

Act III, scenes viii-ix

Vasques informs Hippolita of Soranzo's impending wedding. She offers Vasques an erotic reward for his help in revenging herself on his master, Soranzo.

The officer investigating Bergetto's murder tells Florio and Richardetto that he saw the murderer, whom they identify as Grimaldi. Grimaldi tells the Cardinal of his mistake, however, and the Cardinal offers him papal protection.

Act IV, scene i

At the wedding feast, Giovanni refuses the drink a toast to celebrate Annabella's marriage with Soranzo. Hippolita, disguised as a local maiden, enters with a group of ladies, who dance in celebration. Hippolita reveals herself and offers a toast to the newlyweds. She intends to offer Soranzo a poisoned cup, but Vasques, Soranzo's loyal servant, switches the cups. Hippolita drinks the poisoned wine and dies.

Act IV, scene ii

Richardetto laments his wife's death but expects justice to punish Soranzo as well, for "there is One / Above begins to work." He orders his niece Philotis to return to Cremona and enter a convent as a nun.

Act IV, scene iii

Soranzo, realizing Annabella is pregnant, confronts her and demands the name of her lover. She refuses, and they argue. Vasques enters, calms his master and secretly councils him to plot revenge and let him discover the child's father. Annabella believes Soranzo and kneeling, begs his forgiveness.

Vasques convinces Putana that Soranzo will forgive Annabella if he knows her lover's name, and Putana reveals that Giovanni is the child's father. The Banditti enter and take Putana away to blind her.

Act V, scene i

Annabella repents and prays for someone to appear to hear her confession, just as the Friar passes. She gives him a letter to bring to Giovanni, "bid him read it and repent" and tells him that, because Soranzo has discovered the truth, Giovanni's life is in danger.

Act V, scene ii

Soranzo and Vasques plot revenge against Annabella; they plan to have the Banditti murder her and Giovanni.

Act V, scene iii

The Friar gives Giovanni Annabella's letter, written in her blood, which warns her brother that their secret has been discovered.

Vasques enters to invite Giovanni to Soranzo's birthday party. The Friar warns Giovanni not to attend, but he insists he will go. The Friar decides to leave Parma.

Act V, scene iv

Soranzo and Vasques plan to allow Giovanni to encounter Annabella in Soranzo's bedroom, then, hoping to catch them in the act of love-making, to have them killed by the Banditti.

Act V, scene v

Lying in bed, Giovanni talks with Annabella. Realizing the impossibility of their situation, he kills her and exits with her body.

Act V, scene vi

At Soranzo's party, Giovanni enters with Annabella's heart on his sword. He kills Soranzo, then fights the Banditti. Giovanni, wounded by Vasques, dies. Donado describes this turn of events as a "Strange miracle of Justice," but instead of punishing Vasques for plotting Giovanni's murder, the Cardinal banishes him. The Cardinal then confiscates all the "gold and jewels, or whatsoever ... to the Pope's proper use." Richardetto puts aside his disguise and reveals himself. The Cardinal describes Annabella with the words of the title, "'Tis pity she's a whore," making no mention of Giovanni's role in the incestuous affair.

Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

The action of this play is built around an incestuous sexual relationship between a brother and sister, Annabella and Giovanni. As they become more and more intensely involved, the consequences of their involvement become more intensely tragic, taking the play into the realm of the revenge tragedy. This is a genre of drama in which sudden violent deaths result from vengeful desires in the characters, these deaths being viewed by the survivors (and in many cases by the play's theme) as the only fitting justice for immorality, such as that apparently practiced by Giovanni and Isabella.

Giovanni struggles to convince the Friar that his deep and sexual attraction to his sister Annabella is as valid and as deserving of respect as the love of any man for any woman. He also argues that because he and Annabella came from the same womb, it's only logical that they should love each other so intensely. The Friar tells him repeatedly that it doesn't matter how clever his arguments are. What's wrong is wrong, in the eyes of both God and the world. Giovanni then asks what cure there is for his extreme feelings. The Friar tells him all he can do is repent and give up his desires. When Giovanni protests, the Friar wonders how such an outstanding student and intelligent man should have fallen victim to such lusts, and he suggests Giovanni lock himself away and pray ceaselessly to be relieved of his desires. Giovanni vows to do as the Friar asks.

Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis

There are two key purposes to this section. The first is to set the plot immediately in motion, a purpose accomplished by Giovanni beginning the play already struggling with his incestuous desires for his sister. These desires motivate every action he takes, with each action then challenging other characters to react with actions of their own. This principle of action/reaction/action is the defining principle of plot, motivating each moment through development of cause-and-effect relationships. An example of this process can be found in this scene, as the Friar reacts with righteous disgust to Giovanni's revelation about his feelings. This leads Giovanni to first try to convince him that incest is nothing to be disgusted about, which leads the Friar to urge him to repent, which leads Giovanni to promise to make the effort.

The second purpose of this section is to develop the play's thematic perspectives. It could be argued that because Giovanni tries so hard to justify something inherently wrong and therefore impossible to justify, his position is also that of the play's theme. It could also be argued, however, that in truth the play's thematic point relates to inappropriate sexual passion in general, of which Giovanni's feelings for Annabella are just the prime example among several. This idea is supported by the fact that all of the play's many subplots are motivated by inappropriate sexual passion. The details of

these subplots and their relevance to the play's overall theme will be discussed as they appear.

Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 2 Summary

Grimaldi and Vasquez come in, swords drawn and ready to duel. At first Grimaldi refuses to fight, since Vasquez is just a servant. Vasquez insists, though. The duel begins, and Vasquez quickly gains the upper hand.

Florio comes in, followed by Donado and Soranzo. He demands to know what's going on and why Grimaldi and Vasquez chose to fight right outside his front door. As Annabella and Putana appear and listen from above, Soranzo explains that he and Grimaldi are both suitors for Annabella's hand. Grimaldi has been saying bad things about him. He goes on to explain that responding to such low-minded tactics is beneath him, and therefore he instructed Vasquez (his servant) to challenge Grimaldi to a duel in his place. Grimaldi taunts Soranzo, and Vasquez taunts Grimaldi. Grimaldi goes.

Florio asks Soranzo why Grimaldi's interest in Annabella matters so much, since he (Florio) has already given his approval to Soranzo. Vasquez says Grimaldi's arrogance would make any man want to fight him. Florio says he'd prefer that the love of his daughter caused no bloodshed, and he invites the others into the house for wine.

Putana asks Annabella what she thinks about all this arguing over her. Annabella tells her she's focused on other things and asks her to go. Putana stays, chattering at length about the good and bad points of both Grimaldi and Soranzo and mentioning the latter's affair with the widow Hippolita. She also comments on the arrival of another suitor, the oafish Bergetto. Bergetto then appears, accompanied by his servant Poggio. As Bergetto arrogantly talks about his plans to win Annabella's heart, Poggio comments in an aside on how foolish his master is. After they both go out, Putana warns Annabella that Donado is trying to convince Florio to let Bergetto marry her.

Giovanni appears. Annabella comments on how attractive he is and how sad he seems, and she rushes out to find out what's wrong. Putana follows. Speaking in soliloquy, Giovanni reveals that he's prayed and fasted and examined his soul, but nevertheless he still loves Annabella. He comments that it's not lust but fate that leads him forward. He resolves to tell her how he feels no matter what the cost.

Annabella comes in, followed by Putana. Annabella asks Giovanni what's wrong, and they both entreat Putana to leave them alone. After Putana has left, Giovanni admits that he's upset and speaks in flattering, poetic language about how beautiful Annabella is. He then pulls out his dagger and asks her to kill him by stabbing him in the chest. When Annabella reacts with horror, Giovanni confesses that he loves her and that he's struggled to rid himself of his feelings. He says that either she must love him back or he must die. Annabella reminds him that he's her brother, but he uses a similar argument to the one he used on the Friar. - They came from the same body, which means they share a soul, which means they can love. Annabella confesses that she feels the same about

him. After Giovanni expresses his joy, they kneel and repeat Giovanni's request - - to love each other or be killed. They then kiss and go off to make love.

Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis

Two of the play's many subplots are introduced in this scene, the Grimaldi plot and the Bergetto plot. Both serve as examples of passionate, inappropriate desires. In the case of the Grimaldi plot, Grimaldi knows Soranzo is Florio's choice for Annabella, meaning that his desire for her is inappropriate. The play's premise that such inappropriate attraction leads to destruction is born out by the fact that because of his desire, Grimaldi plots to kill Soranzo and mistakenly murders Bergetto. In terms of the Bergetto plot, his desire for Annabella is inappropriate for the same reason as Grimaldi's, and it is revealed as even more inappropriate when it becomes clear that Bergetto's desires extend to any and every woman. In other words, he's an inappropriately rapacious sexual animal, a fact that in the context of the play's thematic premise, suggests his death at Grimaldi's hands is somehow justified, even though it's the result of mistaken identity.

There are several elements of foreshadowing in this scene. Florio's comment that he wants no bloodshed to arise out of conflict over his daughter is an ironic foreshadowing of the action to come, since a great deal of bloodshed arises out of various men's desire for Annabella. Another piece of similarly ironic foreshadowing appears in Giovanni's request to be killed and the manner in which he wants to die, both of which foreshadow the way he, in turn, kills Annabella. Finally, Putana's reference to Hippolita foreshadows developments in the Hippolita subplot, introduced later in the play.

Two commonly used theatrical devices appear for the first time in this scene, the soliloquy and the aside. In general, both devices are used to illuminate a character's inner state of being - - thought processes, feelings, dilemmas, etc. The principle difference between the two is that the soliloquy is spoken when a character is alone on stage or believes him/herself to be alone. The aside is spoken when the character is not alone on stage and relies on the convention that the other character(s) can't hear what is being said in the aside. Both devices are used in their conventional form here, with the asides performing the secondary function of building suspense. This aspect of the aside will be discussed further as it occurs.

Apart from the introduction of the various subplots, the key narrative point in this scene is the beginning of the sexual affair between Annabella and Giovanni. There are two key elements to note here. The first is the relative ease with which Giovanni convinces Annabella that acting on their mutual attraction isn't wrong. This happens partly because Annabella feels the same kind of attraction and partly because they both clearly believe that experiencing love is more important than living according to an imposed set of rules. It could be argued again that within this aspect of their relationship sits the core of the play's theme, but in terms of the play's overall thematic perspective, the point must again be made that this is the view of the characters and not the play itself. In other

words, these views are the means, not the end - - the way the play explores its theme, not the theme itself.

This idea is supported by the second noteworthy element of this part of the scene, the language with which Giovanni and Annabella express their love. In its poeticism and intensity, the language here strongly resembles that found in plays in which the lovers are more conventional, such as *Romeo and Juliet*. (There are other clear similarities between these two plays, most notably the characters of Putana and the Friar, who resemble the Nurse and Friar Laurence in Shakespeare's play.) The point of the language is not to suggest that the love between the two siblings is as noble and laudable as that of such conventional lovers, but rather that Annabella and Giovanni experience it, believe in it and act on it as such. Again, this is their attitude, not that of the play. The play defines their attitude so strongly in order to make its point, that such passion expressed in any inappropriate relationship is wrong. Herein lives the play's tragedy. Giovanni and Annabella are both clearly beautiful and intelligent, and they are after all only interested in loving and being loved. The tragic flaw that leads to their destruction is that they're blind to what the play, and perhaps society in general, maintains is the deadly inappropriateness of their feelings.

Act 1, Scene 3

Act 1, Scene 3 Summary

Florio tells Donado that he understands that Donado wants Bergetto to marry Annabella but feels he has to be careful to make sure Annabella, and the fortune she inherits, are given to the right husband. Donado assures him that Bergetto will have a substantial guaranteed income, which convinces Florio to allow Bergetto to court Annabella. As Florio goes out, Donado reveals in soliloquy that he's afraid Bergetto is too stupid to win Annabella over. Bergetto and Poggio come in, gossiping about an impossible story that Bergetto is convinced is the truth. Donado tells him he's being foolish and asks how he got on with Annabella when he visited her. Bergetto speaks proudly of what he said to her, and Donado understands that once again he behaved stupidly. He takes Bergetto home, saying he (Donado) will write a flattering letter to Annabella as though it were from Bergetto and send a jewel along with it.

Act 1, Scene 3 Analysis

The primary function of this brief scene is to heighten the play's tension by developing yet another source of conflict for Annabella as she and Giovanni struggle to love one another. There is significant irony here, in that Bergetto and the other suitors plan to court and marry Annabella when, as later scenes indicate, she already believes herself to be married - - to Giovanni.

Act 2, Scene 1

Act 2, Scene 1 Summary

Conversation between Giovanni and Annabella reveals that they have just made love, that Annabella has just lost her virginity and that Giovanni wonders why losing virginity is so important. Annabella comments wryly that it's not important to him because he's a man. Giovanni then suggests that she has to get married, implying that marriage is necessary to keep the sexual nature of their affair a secret. The implication is that sexual activity with Giovanni can be disguised by evidence of sexual activity with a husband. Annabella rejects the idea, saying she wants to be with nobody but him and that all her suitors repulse her. Giovanni says she'll still be able to truly love only him, and this calms her. They bid each other farewell, and Giovanni goes out.

Annabella calls in Putana, who makes crude comments about what's just happened. Florio comes in and introduces Richardetto as a doctor he's brought in to try to find out why Annabella seems unwell. The implication here is that Annabella has been so unhappy about her (to this point) unrequited love for Giovanni that Florio has assumed she's physically ill. Richardetto then calls in Philotis and introduces her as a musician whose playing might help Annabella feel better. After Annabella welcomes them, Florio tells them to wait in another room since he wants to talk with Annabella privately. It can be understood at this point that he wants to discuss plans for her marriage. Richardetto and Philotis go out in one direction, and Annabella and Florio go in another.

Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis

This scene functions principally to increase both the play's stakes (what characters have to lose) and its narrative tension. By consummating their relationship, Giovanni and Annabella have simultaneously deepened their commitment to each other and created a major danger for themselves. This play was written at a time when a young woman's virginity at the time of marriage was extremely important, and for Annabella to go into a marriage having lost her virginity creates a very real danger that she could lose her social status, if not her life. The implication is that both she and Giovanni are prepared to take considerable risks to be together. Tension is increased even further with Florio's apparent intention to plan Annabella's marriage, with the tension arising from both aspects of this scene, foreshadowing the extremely violent confrontation later in the play between Soranzo and Annabella, when he actually makes that discovery. This confrontation is also foreshadowed here by the conversation about virginity, given that Soranzo's anger in the later scene is triggered by his discovery that Annabella's virginity has been lost.

Act 2, Scenes 2 and 3

Act 2, Scenes 2 and 3 Summary

Scene 2 - - Soranzo appears, reading aloud from a poem that talks about how painful love is and commenting in soliloquy that if Annabella had lived at the same time and in the same city as the poet, the poet would have a very different perspective. He's interrupted by Hippolita, who comes in followed by Vasquez and complains at angry length about how she's been treated by Soranzo since their affair ended. Soranzo repeatedly tries to calm her down, but she becomes angrier, revealing that she's been abandoned by him and accusing him of breaking his promise to marry her, made after her husband died on a sea voyage that Soranzo advised him to take. Soranzo says he's realized his promise was wicked and that he repents. He urges Hippolita to do the same and goes out.

Vasquez comments in an aside on how badly Soranzo is behaving. As Hippolita prepares to go, commenting that she will have her revenge, Vasquez asks her to stay, urging her to visit Soranzo again but be calmer. In an aside, Hippolita reveals that she has an idea about how to take her revenge, and aloud she tries to convince Vasquez that ultimately, Soranzo will treat him the same dismissive way he's treated her. In an aside, Vasquez reveals that he understands what she's trying to do, and then aloud he agrees to be part of her plan. Hippolita leads him out as they make plans to talk further.

Scene 3 - - Conversation between Richardetto and Philotis reveals that Richardetto is Hippolita's husband and that he spread the rumor he was dead so he could freely plot to take revenge on her for committing adultery with Soranzo. They discuss Florio's plans for Annabella's marriage, and Philotis reveals that Annabella doesn't seem interested in Soranzo or anybody else. Richardetto says everything that's happened so far fits perfectly with his plans. Grimaldi comes in, asking whether anything the doctor (Richardetto) can do anything to make Annabella love him. Richardetto tells him the sure way to win her is to eliminate the competition - - Soranzo. He tells Grimaldi that he will arrange for an opportunity for Grimaldi to challenge Soranzo to a duel and that he'll give Grimaldi some poison to put on the tip of his sword, which will guarantee Soranzo dies. After Richardetto assures Grimaldi that he can be trusted, Grimaldi goes out. Richardetto reveals in a brief soliloquy that this is the way he's going to have revenge on Soranzo.

Act 2, Scenes 2 and 3 Analysis

These two scenes introduce and develop the play's third and fourth subplots, the Hippolita plot and the Richardetto plot, both of which are initiated by Hippolita's affair with Soranzo. Once again, the play's central theme is illuminated by actions within the subplots. - As these scenes indicate, Hippolita and Soranzo were passionately involved in an inappropriate, passionate, extra-marital relationship, in the same way as Annabella

and Giovanni. Later in the play, as a direct result of their affair, Hippolita and Soranzo both die, also in the same way as Annabella and Giovanni. In other words, parallel inappropriateness leads to parallel ends, and the play's key thematic point is reiterated.

An interesting note here is that Hippolita is the name of the mythological Queen of the Amazons, a race of warrior women in Ancient Greece. The name is appropriate because this Hippolita is also a warrior, - in search of vengeance and justice. Another interesting note is that Vasquez' conversation with Hippolita and his aside are written in such a way that his true position isn't clearly defined. In other words, it's impossible to tell whether he's siding with Hippolita or whether he's playing along in order to find out her plans for Soranzo and ultimately thwart them. The action of the play ultimately reveals that the latter is the case, but for now there is a clear sense of mystery surrounding not only the specifics of Hippolita's plan, but also whether Vasquez is in on it. This is the effectively suspenseful use of the aside discussed earlier. Suspense is also developed through Richardetto's plotting with Grimaldi.

Act 2, Scenes 4 and 5

Act 2, Scenes 4 and 5 Summary

Scene 4 - - Donado and Bergetto argue over whether Bergetto should be allowed to write and deliver his own letter to Annabella. Donado says he's too foolish, but Bergetto says he's written a letter anyway. He tells Poggio to read it out loud, since he (Bergetto) can't read his own handwriting. Poggio reads the letter, which is crude and disrespectful. Donado tells Bergetto and Poggio to go home and stay there until he's called. Bergetto refuses. Donado warns of serious consequences if he doesn't do as he's told and goes out. Bergetto starts for Annabella's. Poggio warns him he might get into trouble, but Bergetto says he doesn't care and goes out. Poggio has no choice but to follow.

Scene 5 - - The Friar tells Giovanni that he's angered heaven by acting on his passion for Annabella. Giovanni again argues that there's nothing wrong with what he's done, saying that if the Friar were young, he'd understand. The Friar suggests that Annabella should be married off to someone. Giovanni says that would only make things worse, suggesting that being with a husband as well as with him would make Annabella greedy and lusty. He then talks at poetic length about how much they love each other, how much she prizes being loved by him and how beautiful she is. The Friar urges him to leave her, and then when Giovanni says he won't, the Friar resolves to visit Annabella himself and try to convince her that she must be the one to end the relationship.

Act 2, Scenes 4 and 5 Analysis

The parallels in these two scenes are interesting to note. Both young men, Bergetto and Giovanni, fight to be allowed to express their love for and attraction to Annabella in the way they desire. Both older men, Dorado and the Friar, struggle to convince them to express their love more appropriately, and both older men take action to head off action taken by the younger men. These parallels of action reinforce the previously discussed idea of parallels of theme - - that inappropriately expressed sexual passion is dangerous and leads to destruction.

An important question arising from Scene 5 is why Giovanni is so passionately opposed to the idea of Annabella being married when in fact he first suggested it. The most obvious answer is that he's fallen deeper in love with her, and he is also growing more and more selfish and jealous. There is little in this scene to support these ideas, but two sets of circumstances later in the play do. The first is Giovanni's comment in Act 5 that he and Annabella slept together for a period of nine months. The second is related to the first, in that by the end of the play Giovanni is obsessed with the idea that no one shall love Annabella but him. He becomes obsessed to the point of killing her to keep it from happening. In terms of this scene, then, it's possible to infer from both these circumstances that at least a few months have passed between Act 2, Scene 1 and Act 2, Scene 5, months in which Giovanni's desire and jealousy have increased.

Act 2, Scene 6

Act 2, Scene 6 Summary

As Florio and Putana watch, Donado gives a letter to Annabella, referring to how much Bergetto loves her. Annabella tells him to keep the letter. At Donado's urging, Florio insists that she read it. As Annabella obeys, Florio confesses to Donado that their plans aren't going as well as he would like. Annabella finishes the letter and returns the jewel that came with it. Florio tells her to keep it and offer Bergetto in exchange a ring her mother gave her on the condition that she give it to no one but her husband. Annabella says she gave it to Giovanni to wear. Florio then asks what her feelings are about Bergetto. Annabella tells Donado to look elsewhere for a wife for him. Donado accepts the rejection graciously and asks Florio whether they'll continue to be friends. As Florio says they will, Bergetto and Poggio arrive, making crude jokes about whether Isabella has read the letter. They then tell how Bergetto was badly beaten by a man whom he insulted. A doctor and a young woman took care of his wounds, and he found the young woman more beautiful than Annabella. Florio realizes he's talking about Richardetto and Philotis, and he reflects positively on Philotis' virtues. Donado gives his permission for Bergetto to court her, saying that Annabella isn't interested. As Bergetto makes crude comments about how many women he could have if he wanted, Donado thanks Florio for his courtesy and says Annabella can keep the ring that came with the letter. He then goes out with Bergetto and Poggio.

Giovanni comes in, and Florio chides him for spending so much time alone. He announces that Bergetto will no longer be courting Annabella, comments again that Soranzo is the only suitor he truly likes and goes out. Giovanni notices the ring and demands that Annabella send it back. Annabella jokes about his being jealous, and he jokes that she'll find out later how jealous he is. Together, they go in to dinner.

Act 2, Scene 6 Analysis

Aside from developing the Bergetto plot by revealing his attraction to Philotis, the key purpose of this scene is to raise the stakes in the main Annabella/Giovanni plot. This is done in two ways. The first is by dramatizing Annabella's open defiance of her father's wishes to marry, a strong indicator of how determined she is to love only Giovanni. Yes, she reads the letter when he tells her to, but she clearly resists his equally clear intention that she marry Bergetto because of his previously revealed high income. The second way in which the stakes are raised is in the dramatization of Giovanni's jealousy, introduced in the previous scene and developed further here.

There is considerable irony in the conversation about the ring given to Annabella by her mother. Florio clearly thinks it was simply a sentimental gesture for Annabella to give the ring to her brother. They did share the same mother, as Giovanni has repeatedly said, and in Florio's mind, Giovanni would get equal value from wearing the ring. The

audience understands, however, that Giovanni now wears the ring for a different reason - because Annabella considers him her husband. In this brief exchange the stakes are again raised. It's made clear that in their minds they are no longer merely lovers, but husband and wife. Meanwhile, Giovanni's joke about jealousy at the end of the scene functions on two levels - an erotic one, implying that later that night he'll make love to her so intensely that she'll forget anyone else, and as still another reminder of his increasing jealousy.

Act 3, Scenes 1 and 2

Act 3, Scenes 1 and 2 Summary

Scene 1 - Bergetto vows to Poggio that he's going to marry Philotis no matter what. They talk about the gifts she gave him, making crude jokes about how he's sexually aroused at the thought of her and about how that arousal also arouses his courage.

Scene 2 - In front of Giovanni, Putana and Vasquez, Florio tells Soranzo he wants him for Annabella's husband, and he urges Annabella to treat Soranzo well. In an aside, Giovanni tells Annabella to think only of him. Florio, Putana and Vasquez go out, leaving Soranzo alone with Annabella. As Soranzo professes his love and pleads for Annabella's love in return, Giovanni appears above, listens and comments in frequent, angry asides. Annabella repeatedly rebuffs Soranzo, sometimes jokingly and sometimes pointedly. Finally, she tells him to forget his hopes of marrying her and asks him to keep her response secret. He agrees. Suddenly, she becomes ill. Giovanni rushes down to her, followed by Florio and Putana, who helps Annabella off. Giovanni and Florio follow them, and Florio sends for a doctor. As they go, Vasquez comes in. Soranzo confesses to him that his hopes of love from Annabella have been destroyed because of Annabella's rejection, and he reveals his fear that her life is in danger. In an aside, Vasquez reveals that Soranzo's life is in danger as well. Aloud, he reassures Soranzo that there's nothing to worry about, and he asks whether Soranzo is sure he was completely dismissed. As they go out, Soranzo promises to tell him the whole story.

Act 3, Scenes 1 and 2 Analysis

Once again, actions and attitudes in two juxtaposed scenes parallel each other. In this case, the parallels can be found in the similar obsessions Giovanni, Soranzo and Bergetto all have for their respective lovers. There is also a parallel between Bergetto and Giovanni's shared defiance of those who would keep them from their lovers. As previously discussed, parallel action reinforces the idea of the parallel theme - that inappropriate sexual expression leads to destruction.

The question of whose side Vasquez is truly on reappears in Scene 2, in his comment that Soranzo's life is in danger. This is conceivably a tricky moment for an actor to play. How should the actor say the line so that the audience isn't able to determine whether he's on Hippolita's side or Soranzo's? Whatever way he plays it, the level of suspense is again increased.

Act 3, Scenes 3, 4, 5 and 6

Act 3, Scenes 3, 4, 5 and 6 Summary

Scene 3 - A distraught Putana reveals to Giovanni that Annabella is pregnant, telling him that if a physician examines her and discovers the truth, Giovanni and Annabella are both doomed. The implication here is that unless Annabella is believed to be having legitimate sexual activity with a husband, the truth of who she has been having sex with will come out, making the crime of being unmarried and pregnant even worse. Giovanni tells Putana to keep both Florio and the doctor away from Annabella until he figures out what to do. Putana agrees.

Scene 4 - Richardetto tells Florio that Annabella said she's sick because she recently ate some melon, but he hints that the real reason she's ill is that she's desperate for sexual activity. Florio understands his meaning and assures him that she'll be married within a couple of days to Soranzo. He says he's already arranged for the ceremony to be conducted by the Friar, who then comes in with Giovanni. Florio commends Giovanni for taking such good care of his sister and then tells the Friar that he (Florio) plans to have Annabella married soon. The Friar says only that he prays heaven will bless her. They all go out to see Annabella.

Scene 5 - Richardetto tells Grimaldi that they must act on their plan to kill Soranzo right away, since he's to be married to Annabella that night. He then gives Grimaldi the poison to put on the sword, and Grimaldi goes out. Philotis comes in, and conversation reveals that she and Richardetto are plotting to have Bergetto marry her, presumably so they can get their hands on his money. Bergetto comes in, followed by Poggio. Bergetto talks about how eager for marriage and sex he is, but Richardetto convinces him to wait until "what's fit to do" (meaning the marriage) is done.

Scene 6 - Annabella is on her knees before the Friar, begging for forgiveness. He speaks of how awful her crime has been, and in poetic language, he describes the hell that awaits her. He says that the only way she can redeem herself is to marry Soranzo. Annabella agrees. Florio and Giovanni come in with the news that Soranzo has come and is willing and able to be married. In an aside, Giovanni comments on Annabella's tears and wonders what the Friar said to her. Soranzo and Vasquez come in, and the Friar presides over a brief betrothal ceremony in which they vow fidelity to each other and their life together.

Act 3, Scenes 3, 4, 5 and 6 Analysis

Another parallel between the main Giovanni/Annabella plot and one of the subplots is defined here. In this case, the parallel relates to the value and necessity of marriage as a condition for appropriate sexual behavior. This perspective is dramatized in several ways in the main plot. These include Putana's fears, Florio's determination to see

Annabella married as the result of Richardetto's implied diagnosis of her condition and the Friar's insistence on marriage. In the subplot, this perspective is dramatized in Richardetto's determination that Bergetto should be properly married to Philotis before he can have her sexually. Again, parallel action supports the idea of parallel theme.

There is some question in Scene 6 of why Annabella is so upset. Up to this point she has come across as quite sure of her feelings, confident in her choices and faithful that there is nothing wrong in what she and Giovanni are doing. Why does she agree to what the Friar demands? A possible answer might lie in her pregnancy. It may be that Annabella believed that as long as there was no outward evidence of her sexual relationship with Giovanni, they could continue it freely. It could be argued that Annabella is less afraid of hell than she is of losing her freedom to be with Giovanni, which would make her repentance here a sham. Later in the play, however, she also urges Giovanni to repent and to give up the relationship, which suggests that her repentance here is real, which in turn suggests that her fear is real. This, then, suggests that her enthusiasm for the relationship was unconsidered - real, but undertaken without genuine awareness of the consequences. If this is in fact the case, it's at this point that the play turns definitely into the realm of tragedy in the classical sense, where a good and noble character becomes undone by a tragic flaw. In Annabella's case, this flaw can be defined as shallowness of perspective, willful blindness or perhaps even self-indulgence. Whatever its particulars, her tragic flaw leads to her destruction in the way the flaws of other tragic characters (such as Macbeth, Hamlet and Oedipus) lead to theirs.

Act 3, Scenes 7, 8 and 9

Act 3, Scenes 7, 8 and 9 Summary

Scene 7 - Grimaldi appears, hiding as he sees someone coming. Bergetto and Philotis come in, wearing disguises and apparently preparing to elope. Bergetto calls Philotis sweetheart. Grimaldi, thinking Bergetto is Soranzo, jumps out, stabs him, and runs off. Bergetto collapses from the effects of the poison on Grimaldi's sword, making crude jokes as Richardetto examines him. Poggio runs out to find police officers, and Philotis frets. The police arrive, and Richardetto sends them off in pursuit of Grimaldi. Bergetto tells Poggio to convey his regards to his uncle and dies. Poggio, Richardetto and Philotis carry the body out.

Scene 8 - After Vasquez tells Hippolita about Soranzo's betrothal to Annabella, he assures her that he's still on her side, saying that he anticipates a healthy reward for his services. Hippolita vows that Soranzo only has a couple of days to live.

Scene 9 - In the company of the police, Florio and Richardetto comfort Donado, who in spite of having thought Bergetto was a fool, still grieves for him. The police affirm that they saw Bergetto's killer running in this direction, offering a description that Florio immediately recognizes as Grimaldi. The police also say the killer ran into the home of the Cardinal, leading Richardetto to assure Donado that the Cardinal will bestow justice.

At that moment, the Cardinal himself appears. He complains at first about the noise being made outside his gates, and then he brings forth Grimaldi, who explains that the killing of Bergetto was a mistake and begs for the Cardinal's forgiveness. The Cardinal explains that because Grimaldi is a nobleman, he has been received into the protection of the Pope, and if Donado wants further justice, he has to appeal to the Pope. He then goes out with Grimaldi. Donado and Florio both comment that what just happened wasn't justice at all, and Florio suggests that even "great men" will be judged in heaven.

Act 3, Scenes 7, 8 and 9 Analysis

Aside from the brief scene with Hippolita and Vasquez, which serves as a reminder that destruction awaits other characters besides the recently murdered Bergetto, the key point of this section is to dramatize the play's theme relating to punishment for inappropriate sexual expression. Even though Bergetto's death is at first glance an accident, it can be argued that within the play's thematic perspective he's killed because of his previously discussed inappropriate sexual greed. In other words, he sexually desires women outside the boundaries of what society allows, in the same way as Giovanni, Annabella, Hippolita and Soranzo have inappropriate sexual desires. Therefore, he must die. The fact that Grimaldi goes unpunished reinforces this idea. He kills someone who deserves to be killed, and therefore he's allowed to go free. This, in turn, is the same reason Vasquez is allowed to go free later in the play after he kills

Hippolita. She had inappropriate sexual desires, and therefore she deserved to die. Therefore, Vasquez goes unpunished. Herein is another example of the previously discussed principle of cause and effect, referred to in the discussion of plot in the analysis of Act 1, Scene 1 but seen here to play an equally important role regarding theme.

There is an interesting parallel here between the Cardinal's anger at the noise outside his gate and Florio's similar complaint in Act 1, Scene 2. It seems that both Florio and the Cardinal consider themselves too important to be disturbed by activity in the streets, which can be interpreted as "real life." Aside from reinforcing Florio's self-importance, also developed through his insistence that Annabella do as he tells her to do, the parallel symbolizes how their sense of importance is an illusion. Real life will always intrude. This is perhaps another manifestation of the play's theme. It is not too much of a stretch to suggest that the so-called "real world" also interferes, and ultimately destroys, the illusions of Giovanni and Annabella, the revenge fantasies of Hippolita and the hypocritical self-righteousness of Soranzo.

Act 4, Scenes 1 and 2

Act 4, Scenes 1 and 2 Summary

Scene 1 - At the conclusion of Soranzo's wedding to Annabella, the Friar wishes them joy. Soranzo thanks him for enabling him to enjoy such a beautiful bride, and in an aside, Giovanni reveals how miserable he is. As Florio urges Donado to forget his grief and join the celebration, Soranzo proposes a toast to Giovanni. Giovanni refuses to participate, and Annabella urges Soranzo to leave him alone.

A group of women in white appears and performs a special dance in honor of the wedding. As Soranzo thanks them, one of them reveals herself to be Hippolita. To general surprise, she reveals that she's come to release Soranzo from his vows and to celebrate his marriage. She asks Vasquez to hand her a cup of wine, and he does. She toasts Soranzo and drinks, and Soranzo reaches for the wine so that he can toast her in return. Vasquez holds the wine away from him, though, and reveals Hippolita's plan - to slip poison into the cup before Soranzo drinks and therefore kill him. He also reveals that he poisoned the cup first, saying he believed Hippolita was too dangerous to live. As she dies, Hippolita curses Soranzo and Annabella. Richardetto comments that this is the end of lust and pride, and Soranzo thanks Vasquez for his loyalty. As the body is taken away, the Friar comments to Giovanni such an event at a wedding is a bad omen for the marriage.

Scene 2 - Richardetto speaks at length to Philotis about how Hippolita (his wife) didn't deserve her death. He says his desire for revenge on Soranzo is stronger than ever, and he's already heard that there's tension in his marriage to Annabella. He urges her to leave and go into a convent, saying there's such extremity and danger of emotion about that the only way for her to remain pure and live a blessed life is to take holy vows. Philotis agrees and goes, saying she welcomes a life of chastity.

Act 4, Scenes 1 and 2 Analysis

Hippolita's death performs the same simultaneous functions as Bergetto's in the previous sequence, to reiterate the play's theme relating to the dangers of inappropriate sexual expression and to foreshadow the deaths of others who also expressed their desires inappropriately. Richardetto's comment following Hippolita's death, already ironic because Hippolita was his wife, reinforces both the play's thematic premise and the way that premise plays out. In the same way as lust and pride dies in Hippolita, it later dies in Giovanni, Annabella and Soranzo.

On a technical level, the suspense built up throughout the action to this point about whose side Vasquez is on pays off here, as his loyalties are finally revealed. His choice combines with Hippolita's appearance to define the climax of their subplot, in the same way as Bergetto's death was the climax of his. These mini-climaxes increase both

suspense and momentum as the action moves with dark inevitability towards the play's overall climax, the confrontation between Giovanni and Soranzo at the end of the play. This climax is also foreshadowed in the Friar's comments at the end of Scene 1, which are ironic almost to the point of humor.

Philotis' comments in her final appearance at the end of Scene 2 reinforce the play's thematic premise. Specifically, her eagerness to embrace chastity states the play's perspective in no uncertain terms - that salvation and a truly godly life can only be found within proper sexual attitudes and behavior.

Act 4, Scene 3

Act 4, Scene 3 Summary

This scene begins in the aftermath of Soranzo's discovery that Annabella is both not a virgin and pregnant. He furiously accuses her of being a whore and of using him as a cover to disguise her lusts. With equal anger she tells him she only married him because he convinced her she'd go mad if he didn't, that she's be prepared to learn to love him and that she's convinced the child she's carrying is a son and potential heir. He demands to know who the father is, and she refuses to tell him but says the father is noble and glorious. Any woman would be glad to bear his child. Soranzo becomes increasingly angry as he demands again and again to know the father's name, and Annabella tauntingly refuses to tell him. He beats her and threatens her, but she dares him to go even further, saying if she died there would be someone left behind to avenge her. This can be taken to mean Giovanni. Soranzo then demands to know whether Florio knew of her condition. Annabella swears he didn't.

Vasquez comes in and asks to know why Soranzo is so upset, speaking at length about how Annabella's previous faults are no fault of his and that Annabella is being honorable by not disclosing the name of her lover. His sympathy arouses contempt in Annabella, who says her life under these circumstances is worth nothing. When Soranzo's anger erupts again, Vasquez whispers to him that he has more chance of finding out the truth if he deals with Annabella gently. This leads Soranzo to tell her how much he loves her and that whoever made her pregnant never loved her as much. Annabella comments that his pain hurts her more than his sword ever could. Soranzo then says that if she promises to be a true and faithful wife, he'll forgive her and accept her. Annabella goes out, apparently prepared to do exactly as he asks. When she's gone, Soranzo reveals to Vasquez that he's still furious. Vasquez tells him that there's another way of finding out the truth, if Soranzo can only be patient. Soranzo goes out to see Annabella.

Vasquez reveals in soliloquy his belief that Annabella's feelings were so powerful that she couldn't possibly have kept them to herself. At that moment, Putana comes in, weeping at the way Annabella's been treated by Soranzo. Vasquez speaks soothingly to her, saying that if Annabella would just reveal the truth, Soranzo's anger would disappear and she'd be treated well again. Putana hints that she has information. Vasquez tries to flatter it out of her. At first Putana resists, but Vasquez manipulates her into revealing that the father of Annabella's baby is Giovanni. He forces her to confirm that she's telling the truth, and then he shouts for a group of Bandits to reveal themselves. When they do, Putana reacts with terror, and Vasquez orders the Bandits to take her out, tie her up, gag her and cut out her eyes. The Bandits drag Putana out.

Vasquez comments in soliloquy about how disgusting Annabella and Giovanni are, and he prepares to tell Soranzo everything. Giovanni comes in, looking for Annabella. Vasquez instantly masks his disgust and tells him that Annabella has fallen ill and has withdrawn to her chamber. Giovanni goes in to see her. Soranzo returns, talking about

how difficult it was for him to mask his anger and desire for revenge. Vasquez tells him he knows everything and takes him out so they can speak in private.

Act 4, Scene 3 Analysis

One could argue that Annabella contradicts herself in this scene, in that her spirited determination to conceal Giovanni's identity is at odds with her previously discussed determination to repent (Act 3, Scene 6). If she truly repents, the argument goes, she should have no fear of the consequences of her admission for either herself or her brother. On the other hand, it could also be argued that she's being perfectly consistent, in that she's acting in exactly the same way as she's acted throughout the play - out of love for Giovanni. She knows that if she gives Soranzo his name, Soranzo will seek justice and in his hotheaded, self-righteous rage will probably kill him. There is yet another possibility. She realizes that once Soranzo knows the father of Annabella's child is her brother, she's likely to be killed as well. Therefore, she conceals Giovanni's name out of a desire for self-preservation as much as anything else. At the core of her choice, however, is her love for her brother, which as previously mentioned has been at the heart of every choice she's made throughout the play.

A previously discussed element of Soranzo's character is defined further in this scene, that element being his deep self-righteousness. His illicit sexual affair with Hippolita has caused him no qualms of conscience whatsoever, as indicated by his callous indifference to her at least partially justified comments to him in Act 2, Scene 2. When it comes to his wife, however, he's all fury and revenge. This hypocrisy is another reason his eventual death can be interpreted as being justified. The first reason is his inappropriate sexual relationship with another man's wife.

Some mention must be made of Vasquez' apparently irrational and unnecessary cruelty to Putana. This is as much a product of the time in which the play was written as it is anything else. Theater of the 1500s and 1600s was, in some ways, obsessed with violence and gore. Playwrights, even Shakespeare early in his career (*Titus Andronicus*), vied with each other to see who could portray the most gruesome deaths and/or mutilations onstage. Vasquez' treatment of Putana falls into this category, as does Giovanni's appearance with Annabella's heart at the end of the play. A key motivation for such grotesque behavior and imagery throughout these plays was revenge, in particular plays of the "revenge tragedy" genre. In these plays, sudden violent deaths result from vengeful desires in the characters. These deaths are viewed by the survivors (and in many cases by the play's theme) as the only fitting justice for immorality such as that apparently practiced by Giovanni, Isabella, Hippolita and Soranzo and abetted by Putana (leading to her gruesome fate here). *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* falls squarely into that category, and the violence it portrays is typical of such violence in such plays.

Act 5, Scenes 1, 2, 3 and 4

Act 5, Scenes 1, 2, 3 and 4 Summary

Scene 1 - Annabella speaks in a soliloquy, overheard by the Friar, about how unhappy and guilty she feels, about her repentance for having slept with Giovanni and about a letter she's written begging him to repent so that both their souls will be saved. The Friar steps forward and volunteers to deliver the letter. Annabella gives it to him, urging him to both hurry and keep the letter a secret because there are spies everywhere whose knowledge of their relationship could result in their deaths. The Friar hurries out, glad that Annabella's soul has been saved by her repentance.

Scene 2 - Vasquez taunts Soranzo into believing the truth about Annabella. Soranzo plots revenge, telling Vasquez to issue invitations for a birthday feast, to ensure Florio and Giovanni are both invited and to make sure the Bandits are ready to ambush her.

Scene 3 - Giovanni speaks in soliloquy about how he still feels passionately about Annabella in spite of her marriage. When the Friar appears, Giovanni tells him all his warnings of hell have come to nothing, but then the Friar gives him Annabella's letter. Giovanni reads it. In it, Annabella says that they've sinned and that their love is no longer a secret. He accuses the Friar of forcing her to write it. Vasquez appears and invites Giovanni to Soranzo's feast. Giovanni angrily agrees to be there, but after Vasquez goes, the Friar suggests he stay away because he believes the banquet is a trap to destroy Giovanni. Giovanni angrily insists that he will go, and the Friar immediately makes plans to return to his monastery and leave Giovanni to despair. Giovanni speaks in soliloquy about his plans to take other people with him if the Friar proves to be right and he is to be killed at the banquet.

Scene 4 - The night of the banquet, Soranzo confirms with Vasquez and the Bandits that they're prepared to do as he asks. Vasquez speaks for the Bandits, saying they'll do what's necessary and telling the Bandits they will receive no reward but a pardon for their crime. Soranzo contradicts him by handing the Bandits some gold, and the Bandits go out. After they've gone, Vasquez reminds Soranzo of all the wrongs he's suffered and of his right to revenge. This makes Soranzo even more resolved to have that revenge.

Giovanni arrives and is greeted with false warmth by Soranzo. Giovanni asks where Annabella is. Soranzo says she's still getting ready and tells Giovanni to go and hurry her along. Giovanni goes. A moment later other guests arrive - Florio, Donado, Richardetto and the Cardinal. Soranzo greets them and ushers them into the banquet hall.

Act 5, Scenes 1, 2, 3 and 4 Analysis

These four scenes are very short, varying in length from a page and a half to three pages. This is because there is very little dramatic or thematic purpose to any of them.

Their prime function is to move the action along with increased momentum towards the play's climactic confrontations in Scenes 5 and 6. The most important element of character development occurs in Scene 3, during which Giovanni reads Annabella's letter and refuses to believe it was truly written by her. This marks the second last step in his transformation from rational-but-deluded ardent lover into possessive, obsessive murderer. His previously discussed jealousy and attraction to his sister have gotten the better of him. He now clearly believes that his and Annabella's relationship is sacrosanct and untouchable and that no one, not even his sister, can or could or should do anything to challenge it. At the same time, however, he's sane enough to realize there's at least some sense in the Friar's warnings of danger, and therefore he resolves to kill other people before he himself is killed, the result of his previously discussed conviction that nothing he or Annabella have done was wrong.

Act 5, Scene 5

Act 5, Scene 5 Summary

Giovanni and Annabella argue over Annabella's repentance. Giovanni accuses her of being a faithless lover, and Annabella tries to convince him that the banquet has been planned to lure them to their deaths. Briefly they debate whether they'll see each other and be able to love each other when they're both dead and in heaven, and then Giovanni begins to weep. He says he's already grieving for the destruction of Annabella's beauty and love and for their being separated, since he doesn't believe they'll be reunited in heaven because he doesn't believe heaven exists. He urges her to pray for salvation and for a kind judgment from history, expressing the hope that joy in their love will triumph over people's disgust at their having committed incest. He takes her in his arms, kisses her and stabs her. When she asks why, he explains that he did it to preserve her honor and their love. Annabella dies. In soliloquy, Giovanni grieves briefly for both Annabella and the child she's carrying, and then he admits that another reason he killed her was to rob Soranzo of the satisfaction of killing her. He reminds himself to continue to have courage and goes out, taking Annabella's body with him.

Act 5, Scene 5 Analysis

This scene contains the play's primary climax, the killing of Annabella. There are two important aspects to this. The first is that Annabella receives what the play's theme defines as justice for her behavior and beliefs. The play suggests here that repentance is not enough and that in the case of such completely immoral and inappropriate crimes as hers, death is the only just consequence. This point had been made earlier through the apparently justified deaths of Bergetto and Hippolita, and it is reiterated in the following scene by the deaths of Giovanni and Soranzo.

The second important aspect to this scene is the development of Giovanni, who has clearly become emotionally unbalanced. This development develops the play's thematic premise in yet another way. By sending Giovanni into insanity, the play is making the thematic point that not only does inappropriate sexual behavior lead to physical destruction, but it also leads to spiritual and emotional destruction. In other words, the context of the play as a whole suggests that in this scene, Giovanni goes crazy because he loves the person he does in the way that he does. That being said, his love and grief for Annabella are still genuine. He truly does believe that by killing her he's saving her, but just because the belief is insane doesn't mean the reason for the belief is equally insane.

Act 5, Scene 6

Act 5, Scene 6 Summary

Soranzo and his guests appear and take their places at the banquet table. In a whisper, Vasquez reminds Soranzo of his purpose, and Soranzo assures him he knows what he's doing. He then invites his other guests to start eating.

Giovanni appears, covered in blood, carrying a human heart upon his dagger and proclaiming the power of love. Amidst shocked exclamations from Soranzo and the other guests, Giovanni reveals that he's killed Annabella and cut out her heart, and he confesses that they've been sexually intimate and that she conceived a child. Soranzo sends Vasquez to get Annabella. While Vasquez is gone, Giovanni insists he killed her. Vasquez returns and confirms what Giovanni has said. Florio collapses in shock and dies. The Cardinal calls Giovanni a monster for "breaking [his] old father's heart," but Giovanni insists that he has the right to outlive his family and take revenge on Soranzo for destroying his happiness. He then stabs Soranzo. Vasquez leaps in to defend his master, struggles with Giovanni and calls in the Bandits. Giovanni at first fights them off, but they overwhelm him. He collapses. Vasquez tells the Bandits to flee, and they run off. Vasquez comforts Soranzo, who orders Vasquez to ensure Giovanni dies. As Soranzo dies, Giovanni thanks Vasquez, saying that in killing him, Vasquez has accomplished what he would have done himself. As he in turn dies, Giovanni's last words are a prayer for mercy and a cry of joy that he'll again be able to see Annabella.

The Cardinal demands that Vasquez tell him whether anyone else knows about the incest. Vasquez tells him about Putana, and the Cardinal then commands that she be taken outside the city limits and burned at the stake. He also says that because Vasquez isn't Italian, he can't be tried for his crimes but instead will be banished. Vasquez goes out, happy that he's being sent home and pleased that the goals of his master (Soranzo) have been accomplished.

As Richardetto reveals his identity, the audience also learns that before he spread the word that he was dead, he was a good friend of the Cardinal. As Richardetto and Donado discuss why Richardetto did what he did, the Cardinal tells them to save their conversation for later. He refers to Annabella and comments on how strange it is that incest and murder should have been brought into being by one "so rich in nature's store" (i.e. beautiful, intelligent and graceful). He concludes by saying that no one could look at the situation and not say "'tis pity she's a whore."

Act 5, Scene 6 Analysis

This scene contains the play's second climax, the confrontation between Giovanni and Soranzo - or, to look at it from its metaphorical perspective, the confrontation between sin and justice. Both Giovanni and Soranzo face the apparently justified consequences

of their particular sin, sexual immorality, but it's interesting to note that Giovanni seems to be aware on some level that his death is in fact deserved, while Soranzo seems completely unaware of why he's dying. Self-righteous to the end, his demand that Vasquez ensure that Giovanni dies defines Soranzo even more clearly as perhaps the worst of all the immoralists in the play, since he's completely unaware of what he's done. This makes his death, within the context of the play's theme, perhaps even more justified than even Giovanni and Annabella's deaths.

Interestingly, Florio's death occurs from what might be called natural causes. He has a heart attack, rather than being actively murdered by the others. The question arises whether his death is also justified, and it could be argued that because he committed no kind of sexual crime and his death wasn't violent, he's innocent. It must be remembered, however, that in the religion and culture of the time, parents were held to some degree accountable for the actions and attitudes of their children. This means that from the play's socio-thematic perspective, Florio was to at least some degree guilty. He did not guide Giovanni and Annabella well enough to know that incest was wrong. His crime is of less seriousness than theirs, which is the reason why he doesn't die by anybody's hand. He does die, however, which suggests that on some level and for some reason, he's still guilty.

The appearance of Giovanni with Annabella's heart is, on one level, a vivid example of the previously discussed desire for gore in theatergoers of the period. On another level, however, it provides one of the play's very few symbols, and as such, it's most important. Within the play's thematic context, by initiating their sexual relationship Giovanni kills Annabella spiritually in the same way as he later kills her physically. His carrying in of her heart symbolizes this spiritual murder, and it may not be going too far here to suggest that the dagger at this point becomes a phallic symbol, suggesting that Annabella is, in fact, killed by sexual desire and power.

Vasquez ends the play unpunished for the same reason as Grimaldi does. He is, in effect, acting as the hand of God, striking down those whose actions and attitudes have been defined as immoral.

The Cardinal's final comment at first glance comes across as merely a clever exit line, a pointed comment that's memorable without having a great deal of genuine thematic relevance. There is another level of function at work here, however, if the word "whore" is taken to mean someone with inappropriate sexual desires as opposed to specifically a female prostitute (who, after all, expresses her sexuality in an inappropriate way). From this angle, the comment can be seen as a reference not only to Annabella, but also to Giovanni, who is at one point described (by the Friar) in glowing terms similar to the way the Cardinal describes Annabella. As such, the comment can then be interpreted as illuminating the play's thematic premise from another perspective, suggesting that inappropriate sexual expression can destroy even the most moral, beautiful and worthy souls. The Cardinal here can be seen as grieving for the destruction of such souls, meaning that his comment is actually yet another warning against such forms of sexual expression. This warning carries with it the suggestion that

anyone can be that kind of whore and that "'tis a pity" that any soul should be lost in such a way.

Characters

Annabella

Florio's daughter, in love with her brother, Giovanni. In the course of her affair with Giovanni, she becomes pregnant and agrees to marry Soranzo to cover her transgression. Annabella confesses her incest to the Friar and writes a repentant letter to Giovanni. Soranzo discovers her pregnancy and vows to revenge himself on Annabella and her brother Giovanni at his birthday party. Before he can, however, Giovanni murders his sister, kills Soranzo, and dies fighting Vasques.

Bergetto

Donado's nephew, Bergetto is dense and vulgar. Much of the play's comic relief comes from his efforts to sue for marriage with Annabella. He is murdered by Grimaldi, who mistakes him for Soranzo.

Friar Bonaventura

A friar and Giovanni's professor when he studied a the university. Bonaventura urges Giovanni to fight his incestuous feelings for his sister. When Bonaventura eventually encounters Annabella, he convinces her to repent and to break off the erotic relationship with her brother. When Giovanni refuses to listen to his advice, Bonaventura leaves.

The Cardinal

Nuncio to the Pope, the Cardinal protects Grimaldi though he knows he's guilty of Bergetto's murder. At the play's end, the Cardinal confiscates the lovers' property in the name of the church.

Donado

A citizen of Parma, Donado is Bergetto's uncle. He hopes to marry his foolish nephew with Annabella by writing a love letter for him, but Bergetto insists on writing□and reading□his own letter. When Bergetto's wooing fails and she rejects him, he seems unfazed and goes off to find prostitutes.

Florio

A citizen of Parma, father to Giovanni and Annnabella. While he seems to have his children's best interests at heart, telling a friend that he will not force Annabella to marry

someone she does not want to, his ideas of "what is best" for his daughter are ultimately financial rather than emotional.

Giovanni

The son of Florio, Giovanni loves his sister, Annabella. They have an incestuous affair, by which she becomes pregnant. To conceal her affair, she agrees to marry Soranzo. In the end, Giovanni murders Annabella, enters Soranzo's birthday feast with her heart on his sword, and fights the Banditti and Vasques, who ultimately kills him.

Grimaldi

A Roman gentleman who loves Annabella, he conspires with Richardetto to murder Soranzo with a poisoned rapier. Richardetto, disguised as a doctor, agrees to help Grimaldi. Richardetto, who knows his wife Hippolita is having an affair with Soranzo, hopes to get revenge on his wife's lover. When they carry out their plot, however, Grimaldi mistakenly kills Bergetto instead of Soranzo. He escapes justice for this crime when the Cardinal grants him immunity.

Hippolita

Richardetto's unfaithful wife who is having affair with Soranzo. When rejected by Soranzo, she plans revenge with the help of his servant Vasques, offering him the reward of sexual favors and wealth for his help. In the event, he betrays her and remains loyal to his master Soranzo. Hippolita ends up killed when Vasques hands her the poisoned cup she intended for Soranzo.

Philotis

Richardetto's naive, subservient niece, she obeys her uncle in everything. First, he hopes she will marry Soranzo, then, he decides she must enter a convent. Without protest, she agrees.

Poggio

Bergetto's relatively loyal servant, Poggio seems to be smarter than his master, which under the circumstances is not that difficult. Also providing comic relief, he accompanies Bergetto on his fanciful adventures.

Putana

Annabella's tutoress, she accepts the news of her mistress's affair with her brother agreeably, saying she believes it is acceptable to have affairs with brothers, fathers, or anyone if the mood strikes. Tricked by Vasques into revealing the paternity of Annabella's child, he has her bound and blinded.

Richardetto

Hippolita's husband and Philotis's uncle, Richardetto disguises himself as a physician in order to uncover his wife's infidelities with Soranzo. He plots with Grimaldi to help him murder Soranzo. His motivation is revenge for Soranzo's affair with Hippolita, but Richardetto, cold and calculating, does not get very upset when his wife dies.

Soranzo

A nobleman in love with Annabella, Soranzo is having an affair with Richardetto's wife Hippolita. Soranzo marries Annabella, discovers she's pregnant by her brother, and plans revenge for this humiliation. Before he can punish them, however, Giovanni kills Soranzo at his birthday party.

Vasques

Soranzo's loyal servant and formerly servant of his father, Vasques proves central to his master's plan for revenge. Vasques pretends to plot with Hippolita to help her revenge herself on Soranzo in exchange for her money and sexual favors, but in the end he remains loyal to his master. He lies to Putana to discover the identify of the father of Annabella's baby, then has Annabella's tutoress bound and blinded. At the play's end, the Cardinal exiles him instead of punishing him for his role in the plans for revenge and murder.

Themes

Marriage

Tis Pity She's a Whore's action revolves around love and marriage, though for Ford, the two are not necessarily synonymous. Florio indicates that his daughter Annabella may choose any suitor she loves. He encourages her match with Soranzo, however, for financial reasons rather than emotional ones. The same seems true of Richardetto, who hopes to marry his niece Philotis to Donado's foolish but wealthy nephew Bergetto. Again, his aim is marriage not for love but for money. Ironically, the close family ties of the only two people who do seem to love each other□Giovanni and Annabella□prevent their incestuous love from being validated by society in marriage.

Love

The play presents examples of many kinds of love. First, the obviously forbidden but powerful incestuous love□which may be better described as lust□between Giovanni and Annabella. Next is the adulterous love between Soranzo and Hippolita. Richardetto does not seem like either a loving husband or caring ward for his niece. His wife Hippolita's love for Soranzo turns to murderous revenge. Her extreme passions lead to disaster, foretelling the play's ending and the destruction of Giovanni and Annabella.

The play also offers examples of love for financial reward, a kind of mercenary love. Gimaldi and Bergetto want to marry Annabella, primarily for her money. Bergetto shows the presence of bawdy love in his discussion of prostitution. Finally, Soranzo and Giovanni, among other characters, discuss the ideals of "Neoplatonic" and "Courtly Love." Their understanding of the ideals of love function ironically to elucidate their imperfect characters. Soranzo is overheard reading a courtly love sonnet, subsequently revealing that his attitudes toward love are not in the least courtly. Giovanni's disingenuous arguments in favor of consummating his incestuous relationship with his sister stem in part from Neoplatonic ideas.

Justice

As in any story of crime and punishment, law and justice figure prominently in Ford's tragedy. Complicating things here, though, is the fact that while the lovers may be wrong, no one else in their world seems right. The play offers no ethical standard or admirable role model. It is impossible not to see the irony when, at the play's end, Donado describes the tragic turn of events as "strange miracle of justice." After all, Annabella, who has repented, has been murdered. Vasques, who plotted the lovers' murder, is freed by the Cardinal, who also grants a reprieve to Grimaldi, whom he knows to be guilty of murder. The Cardinal then confiscates the lovers' property. While in the first act, the Friar says that "heaven is just," there appears to be little justice in the world Ford presents.

Religion

Religion in the sense of sin and ethics plays a central role in the play, though religion as spirituality seems to offer no solutions to the lovers' problems. While Bonaventura, the Friar, appears a relatively positive figure, his prayers and advice seem largely ineffectual and go unheeded by all save Annabella. Religion condemns the lovers' actions, but the Friar's advice offers little help and the actions of the other clerical figures seem overtly hypocritical□the Cardinal offers sanctuary to Grimaldi, a known murderer, and at the play's end, takes possession of the lovers' land in the name of the church. Overall, the play reveals religion not as spiritual and ethical but as worldly and corrupt.

Style

Revenge Tragedy

As the name implies, a Revenge Tragedy is a play in which desire for revenge results in tragedy. Made popular in the Elizabethan period with plays like Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy,* a sophisticated example of the form is Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. This dramatic subgenre is modeled on the Roman plays of similar themes, particularly the tragedies written by Seneca.

Courtly Love

The concept of courtly love first appears in the medieval period in the poetry of the Provencal troubadour poets. The idea is for the lover to woo the most worthy woman in the land, though this often was the queen or wife of a powerful man. Scholars debate as to whether this love ever was consummated, but an elaborate code of erotic language and practices grew up around it. The stereotypes of lovers losing sleep and appetite, are found in courtly love. A medieval example is *Sir Gowain and the Green Knight,* in which the lord's wife attempts to seduce Sir Gowain. Other examples are the various Arthurian romances and sonnet sequences by such renaissance writers as Sidney, Surry, Wyatt, Shakespeare, and Spenser.

Neoplatonism

Neoplatonism refers to elaborations of Greek philosopher Plato's ideas which develop from late classicism into the nineteenth century. Though complicated, in general they suggest (1) that this physical world is not real but a fallen reflection of an ideal world of "Forms" which exists beyond it; and (2) that a relationship exists between beauty and ethics, that the reason humans seek beauty in this physical world is because it reminds them of the good they experienced in the ideal world. Examples of these notions pervade Medieval, Renaissance, Neoclassical, and even Romantic philosophy and literature.

The Four Humours

According to Humour psychology, the balance of four bodily fluids determines human personalities. Unusual or "humourous" people have an imbalance in either blood, phlegm, yellow bile, or black bile. Too much blood makes a person sanguine, happy and amorous; yellow bile makes a person choleric, stubborn, and impatient; too much phlegm results in a phlegmatic personality□dull and cowardly; while excesses of black bile made a person melancholy, introspective, and sentimental.

Robert Burton, whose *Anatomy of Melancholy* explores the relationship between love and the humours, strongly influenced Ford. The theory also aids in the categorization of various Renaissance characters (in Shakespeare, for example, Hamlet is melancholy, Hot Spur is choleric, etc.). In time, the Comedy of Humours developed, which pokes fun at characters driven by one aspect of their personalities, resulting in the meaning of the word humor today.

Historical Context

When Ford's drama is read, there is frequently the suspicion that the playwright is exaggerating, that no society could be as unstable and corrupt as that of the Parma he depicts. While parts of the play□ particularly Annabella's death at the end□seem extravagant (and, as some critics might say, "baroque"), the historical moment which produced Ford's dramas was a contentious one. To better understand the reign of King Charles I, who ruled when Ford wrote his "Caroline" dramas, a history of England's earlier kings is necessary.

When Henry VII died in 1509, he left England on relatively sound financial footing, but his son, Henry VIII, through expensive foreign wars and uninhibited personal spending, began the dangerous trend of running a deficit. The question arose as to who would pay off the deficit. Those paying the increased taxation soon wanted more say in how the king spent their money. By the seventeenth century, a split developed between the king and elements of the landed classes□the land owners represented in Parliament□that, during the reign of King Charles I, resulted in civil war in 1642 and the king's beheading in 1649.

During this tempestuous period, when people discussed political theory, it frequently took the form of a debate between Royalism and Republicanism. The Royalists believed in monarchical absolutism (the absolute power of the king), while Republicans, influenced by the relatively democratic examples of classical Athens and contemporary Italian city states like Florence, Sienna, and Venice, argued for a balance of power between the executive branch□the king□and the legislature□the Parliament□in a form of representative democracy. Interest in Italy in part accounts for Ford's setting the play in Parma.

Religion complicated these economic and political considerations. In 1517, Martin Luther's "Wittenberg Theses" began the Protestant Reformation, which lead to breaks with the Catholic Church. In 1534, Henry VIII himself broke with Rome (the seat of the Catholic Church), primarily because of the Pope's failure to annul the king's childless marriage to Catherine of Aragon. In the 1534 Act of Supremacy, Henry VIII declared himself the head of the English Church. Religion remained a divisive issue, though, as Henry's son Edward VI continued England's move toward Protestantism, a trend violently reversed after his death by the Catholic Queen "Bloody" Mary.

In 1558, Queen Elizabeth took the throne, steering a militantly centrist path between English Catholics and traditional "High Church" Anglicans on one hand, and reformist "low church" Dissenters and Puritans on the other. While all these religious issues seem complicated, they help explain Ford's negative representations of the Catholic Friar and Cardinal. It also helps explain why within the play, religion itself□about which different people may hold different beliefs□fails to offer any absolute standard of ethical conduct.

Ford himself was born in 15 86, one year before Protestant Elizabeth's execution of Catholic Mary Queen of Scots and two years before Protestant England's invasion by

Catholic Spain's Armada. In 1601, when Ford was just fifteen, the rebels involved in Essex's rebellion against Elizabeth captured one of Ford's relatives. After the queen's death and the coronation of James I in 1603, Ford and his fellow law students would have followed the trial of Sir Walter Raleigh. This grossly unfair proceeding, actually a referendum on Raleigh's belligerent aggression toward Catholic Spain in the New World, ended with his execution in 1618. In 1605, Catholic conspirators involved in the Gunpowder Plot attempted to blow up the king and Parliament.

Decker Roper provided another example in which the history of the moment is not much stranger than the fiction of Ford's drama. The new Earl of Essex married Francis Howard, but the marriage was annulled to enable Frances to marry the Earl of Somerset, a favorite of King James. Thomas Overbury, who attended the Middle Inns with Ford and who condemned these actions, found himself imprisoned in the Tower, where Somerset and his new wife poisoned him. Some think Ford contributed to a collection of elegiac poetry marking Overbury's death.

The religious and political conflicts of Ford's day prove as dramatic as his fiction. While critics have not been able to identify exact historical sources for Ford's characters, the anxieties about marriage and power, about religion and ethics, about the nobility and the wealthy bourgeoisie play significant roles in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore.*

Critical Overview

As might be expected of a play that deals with incest, critical response to Ford's drama was often intense. Contemporary critical views that paint *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* as decadent or psychological follow the opinions of two important nineteenth century critics, William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb, according to Mark Stavig in *John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order.* For Hazlitt, Ford was "a decadent romantic who delighted in melodramatic plots, licentious scenes, and revolt against the established moral order." Lamb focused less on Ford's ethics, believing that "at his best he is a profound and objective analyst of human behavior who portrays a higher morality that stresses the elevating effect of love and the nobility of endurance in time of adversity."

It is easy to see why the Hazlitt school sees Ford as decadent. After all, most critics believe *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* to be the first play in English to take incestuous lovers as its main protagonists and treat them with some sympathy. The question becomes, why does Ford choose this kind of subject matter? In *The Problem of John Ford,* H. J. Oliver believed that after generations of powerful drama, Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences (those who lived during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James) had become jaded to the dramatic conventions of the time, requiring Caroline dramatists (who wrote during the reign of King Charles) to present bolder plots and characters. "That is why the Caroline dramatist turned more and more for his subject matter to the daring, the immoral, the unnatural; that is partly why Ford, among others, sought subjects like incest and adultery and was content to have Giovanni appear with Annabella's bleeding heart on his dagger."

Elizabethan dramatists influenced the writers who came after them, and William Shakespeare's influence looms large in Ford's major dramas, particularly *Othello, King Lear,* and Romeo and Juliet. In *'Tis Pity She's a Whore,* the accidental murder of the foolish Begatto instead of Soranzo is reminiscent of Hamlet's accidental killing of the foolish Polonius instead of Claudius. Hamlet has the opportunity to kill Claudius as he prays for forgiveness but does not, wanting instead to enact his revenge at a moment when the murderer's sins on his soul will damn him to hell. A similar action occurs at the end of Ford's drama, when Soranzo allows Giovanni to be alone with Annabella, hoping they will act lustfully and then be killed by Soranzo in the midst of an incestuous act.

To many critics, though, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* seems in many ways an incestuous retelling of *Romeo and Juliet.* Comparing the two plays, many of the same characters and conflicts arise: young lovers, forbidden love, a meddling nurse and friar, and tragedy all around.

Paul Cantor wrote in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* "Ford takes the potentially hackneyed theme of star-crossed young lovers and gives it a new twist by making the Romeo and Juliet of his play brother and sister." One difference, though, is that "Annabella's father, unlike Juliet's, makes it clear that he will not force her into a marriage against her wishes." Because contemporary society is largely a world which endorses marriage for love, "Ford must search for a form of love that will not have the

endorsement of society," in this case, incest. Other critics believed that Annabella's father Florio only gives lip-service to her marrying for love, for he actually urges her to love the richest and most socially elevated suitor, Soranzo.

As indicated above, popular demand in part explains Ford's technique of offering controversial reworkings of familiar plots. Cantor wrote that "Ford's attraction to normally taboo themes, such as incest, may be accounted for by his need to get the attention of audiences who thought they had already seen everything there was to see on the stage." Another reason Ford may have selected such controversial subject matter for his dramas is that such powerful characters and emotions allowed him to explore the sometimes dark and dangerous depths of the human psyche. This generally follows the Lamb school's opinion of Ford, a dramatist who to Leech reveals a "preoccupation with strange and perilous human conduct."

This moral interrogation and psychological introspection seems a product of the times. In *Elizabethan and Jacobean,* F. P. Wilson wrote that what "distinguishes the Jacobean age from the Elizabethan is its more exact, more searching, more detailed inquiry into moral and political questions and its interest in the analysis of the mysteries and perturbations of the human mind." As Oliver noted, "inquiry, analysis□these interest the Jacobean writers, these rather than incident."

What audiences see in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore,* according to Clifford Leech in *John Ford,* is that Ford "had a profound understanding of suffering, and an ability to present it in dramatic poetry; he had a deep interest in abnormal conditions of the mind ... he had a high ideal of human conduct, a reverence for love and fidelity and the relation of man and women in true marriage."

This understanding and reverence leads Ford to allow "Giovanni to make an unusually spirited and eloquent defense of forbidden love," according to Cantor. "Moreover, Giovanni and Annabella are by far the most vibrant characters in the play, and, even though their love destroys them, there are strong suggestions that they have in the process attained an intensity of experience from which the crassly conventional characters in the play are barred." So the line separating the rewards and evils of the lovers' incestuous transgression becomes blurred; physically and emotionally, their love offers powerful satisfactions, but society sees it as sinful and it precipitates their mutual destruction. That society, though, is emotionally decadent, morally corrupt, and spiritually bankrupt. The play offers not positive example of true love or happy marriage.

This raises points of similarity between Ford's play and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus,* wrote Cantor. In both plays, "the protagonists are overreachers and perish in their attempt to go beyond the limits of normal humanity, but the forces which oppose them in the scheme of the play hardly have a solid moral basis in their opposition, being involved as they are in a shabby web of sexual intrigue and assassination plots."

What then does a viewer make of Ford's dramatic choices? Is he presenting audiences with a decadent world in order to endorse or condemn adherent behavior? Another way to ask this question is: what did Ford really believe? Derek Roper, in his introduction to

the play, traced Ford's ideas to his early writing, which reveal three tendencies: "romantic and Platonic love, a Calvinistic kind of Protestantism, Stoic beliefs and the cult of honour." All of these concepts figure prominently in the characters and conflicts in Ford's later dramas.

In *John Ford,* Leech usefully identifies the playwright's debt to Queen Henrietta Maria's cult of Platonic Love. According to Leech, Ford saw Platonic love as a logical impossibility, realizing that "the courtly code was at odds with human nature and its demands ... Ford's plays are commonly studies of a passion which is inclusive and destructive.... His lovers may talk of their passion in ideal terms, but there is always in them a full drive toward coition: it is this which commonly destroys them."

For Stavig, a reading of Ford's early works offers insight into his Christian humanist morality. Ford's writings, drawing heavily on the classical ethics of such writers as Aristotle, Cicero, Plutarch, and Seneca, urges people to trust virtue more than fortune. Ford's stoicism demands a balance between reason and passion, with love being the most difficult passion to control. Roper, however, warned about the difficulty in ascertaining Ford's beliefs, as opposed to those of his characters. "His dedications may suggest some sympathy for those noblemen who felt deprived of their rightful influence in government by royal favorites; and some plays show admiration for aristocratic attitudes, particularly dignified defeat."

Finally, several critics praised Ford's use of language and skillful creation of poetry itself. Leech for one believed that Ford wrote "in a time when poetic drama was in decay, and he shows what could be done by a playwright whose purpose needed poetry but would have been ruined by an ostentatious display of the merely 'poetic.'" Poet T. S. Eliot, writing in *Selected Essays,* continued in this strain, admiring Ford's poetry, particularly "that slow solemn rhythm which is Ford's distinct contribution to the blank verse of the period.... The varieties of cadence and tone in blank verse are none too many, in the history of English verse; and Ford, though intermittently, was able to manipulate sequences of words in blank verse in a manner which is quite his own."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

Critical Essay #1

In this essay, Schmidt examines ethics, particularly in regard to the concepts of incest and greed, as they are presented in Ford's play.

In many ways, Ford's play is a difficult one with which to come to terms. On one level, that of plot, it seems rather obvious and scandalous at that. The play tells the tale of Giovanni and Annabella, a brother and sister, who consummate an incestuous relationship which ultimately destroys them, as well as others. Problems for the audience arise when we start to consider the characters' actions in the context of the play itself. For one thing, while the lovers may appear to be villains□after all, their actions are condemnable□the play offers heroes. No character seems entirely worthy of our admiration, and even those who have some good qualities□Friar Bonaventura, for example□remain ineffectual and unable to change things for the better. Most of the other characters are greedy and unscrupulous, even murderous! How then are we to understand the meaning of transgression and ethics in Ford's play?

We can begin by considering *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* in light of Aristotle's theory of tragedy, as laid out in his *Poetics*. By now, his theory may be familiar: tragedy tells the story of the fall of a socially or morally elevated person, through a combination of fate and flaw. The "tragic flaw" may be desire for power, as in Shakespeare's *Macbeth,* which leads the title character and his wife to murder and destruction; or revenge, as in such "revenge tragedies as Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy,* or Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* Giovanni's tragedy, however, more closely resembles that of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex,* whose intellectual pride leads him to believe that he can outsmart the Fates and avoid his destiny of murdering his father and marrying his mother. A closer parallel, though, might be Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus,* in which the highly educated doctor sells his soul to the devil in exchange for greater knowledge and power.

While Giovanni believes his predicament to be the product of his fate, he actually seems to use fate as an excuse to justify his tragic flaws of uncontrollable lust and intellectual pride. A brilliant student trained in logic, Giovanni's scholastic intellect leads him to atheism. In a conversation with Annabella, Giovanni reveals how his faith in reason has under mined his religious faith: "The schoolmen teach that all this globe of earth / Shall be consum'd to ashes in a minute /... But 'twere somewhat strange / To see the waters burn: could I believe / This might be true, I could believe as well / There might be hell or Heaven." We see that he has faith, not in the power of God but the power of reason, which leads him to atheism, pride, and, ultimately, death.

In part, Giovanni's problems stem from his wilful misreading of Renaissance ideas about Platonic love, which posits an equality between the beautiful and the good. Things that seem physically beautiful on the surface merely manifest a deeper, spiritual goodness. This explains our attraction to physical beauty: we seek the beautiful as a way of reaching the good. Consider the ideas presented in one of the most influential Renaissance texts, Baldesar Castiglione's broadly Neoplatonic *The Courtier:* "Gracious and sacred beauty is the supreme adornment of everything; and it can be said that in

some manner the good and the beautiful are identical... the proximate cause of physical beauty is ... the beauty of the soul.... Therefore beauty is the true trophy of the soul's victory."

Giovanni's inability to control his lust, as Castiglione might explain, lies in the fact that the largely reasonable soul finds itself trapped in the "earthly prison" of the body. There, "deprived of spiritual contemplation, the soul cannot of itself clearly perceive the truth when it is carrying out the duties of governing the body," which can be manipulated by passion. Beauty attracts admiration, but "the mind is seized by desire for the beauty which it recognizes as good." Guided by the senses, the body "falls into the gravest errors" and mistakenly believes that beauty results from the beautiful body, rather than the ethical soul within. By the play's end, the unrepentant Giovanni still has not learned this lesson, though Annabella has come to associate beauty and ethics, saying, "Beauty that clothes the outside of the face / Is cursed if it be not cloth'd in grace."

Earlier in the play, Giovanni and Annabella make this mistake, justifying their error by believing that Fate has created their tragic situation. As Giovanni says, denying at least in part the truth, "'tis not, I know, / My lust, but 'tis my fate that leads me on." While their mutual attraction may have been fated, though, their acting on that attraction clearly requires at least in part some exercise of free will. Fate drives their love, but they make the disastrous choice of consummating it. As the earlier Castiglioine writes, while young lovers may fall victim to their passions, the desires of "mature lovers ... [are] guided by rational choice ... [and so] possess completely the beauty they love."

Giovanni and Annabella's immaturity prevents them from restraining their unreasonable passion. Worse, where Giovanni's reason should control his passion, instead his reason makes matters worse. In his initial discussion with Friar Bonaventura, Giovanni justifies the superiority of incestuous love over socially accepted forms of affection. He says, "Say that we had one father, say one womb /... gave both us life and birth; / Are we not therefore each to other bound / So much the more by nature, by the links / Of blood, of reason□nay, if you will have't, /Even of religion." Giovanni's intellectual pride drives him to employ logic and argument to justify his incestuous desires, rather than to in hibit them.

Giovanni's misuse of "natural" reason to justify his "unnatural" love for his sister raises the play's key issue: what might the incest itself symbolize? If love in the broadest sense indicates a relationship of connection and responsibility, then there are resemblances between and among the various kinds of love: parental love of children, filial love of siblings, erotic love, and the "love" of a ruler for his people. Considering the play in the context of contemporary events sheds light on the significance of the "unnatural" in social relations.

First, how does Ford represent the love of parents for children? While some critics believe Annabella's father Florio truly wants her to marry for love and happiness, others argue that he merely offers lip-service to a love match, actually urging her union with the richest and most socially elevated suitor, Soranzo. Significantly, Ford's play dramatizes the conflict between romantic marriage for love and mercenary marriage for profit.

Overall, marriage seems a poor option of Annabella, whose bad luck leads to being pursued by a host of undesirable suitors: the unfaithful Soranzo, the cowardly Grimaldi, and the foolish Bergetto. Only Giovanni, her brother, seems to love her truly, and society prohibits their attractions. And Florio is not the only parent urging marriage on a child for solely monetary gain. Donado too actively tries to marry Annabella to Bergetto, whom he knows to be a fool.

Throughout the play, reason is the target and paradox the tool, as the foolish act reasonably and the reasonable act foolishly. Bergetto, whose uncle wants him to marry for money, is refused by Annabella, but he says he can buy women any time he wants□he speaks truly about loveless mercantile matrimony, which, like prostitution, exchanges money for sex. Her uncle, who prefers she marry the honorable Soranzo, is foolish were he to know what we the audience knows, that Soranzo is unfaithful and vindictive. Throughout the play, however, Ford presents examples of tainted love: Hippolita' s for Soranzo is adulterous, Hippolita's offer of sex as payment to Vasques resembles prostitution. Grimaldi's woos Annabella primarily because of money. The only love that seems true, at least in part, is that between Giovanni and Annabella; though incestuous, it is, after all, based on a long-term friendship, real emotional contact, and passion.

The "unnatural" love of Giovanni and Annabella extends, at least symbolically, to the corrupt love of parents for children, which they express solely in terms of monetary gain, rather than emotional happiness. We can extend that metaphor even further and see that corruption disrupted the "natural" relations people had from the Middle Ages come to expect between their court and their king. As we will see, due to the Carolinian court's corruption, the ideal courtier did not receive reward, while the well-connected, manipulative one did.

According to D. M. Loades's *Politics and the Nation, 1450-1660,* by the early-seventeenth century, a " 'conspiracy of rich men' now consisted in the swarm of favourites and parasites who swarmed around the king . . . the court in many respects resembled a market [for royal patronage], where prices and profits were both high and the competition fierce and unscrupulous." It is this courtly world which Ford satirizes: corrupt, mercenary, unethical. Though these groups of influential men did not make up political "parties" in the modern sense, they did create a divisive sense of "faction"□high church, low church, old money, and new□among the courtly classes. These divisions ultimately contributed to the civil war in 1640 and King Charles's beheading in 1649.

As we have seen, when parents urge their children to marry, not for happiness, but for money, those parents violate their responsibility and corrupt their love. The same seems true when the court reeks of corruption and the king rewards, not good deserving men, but those with political connections. All of these corruptions of paternal, filial, and social "love" are "unnatural" in that they violate the "natural" emotional, ethical connections and responsibilities each love requires. In this way, they resemble incest, which some might say also violates the "natural" order.

As Derek Roper pointed out in his introduction to *'Tis Pity She's a Whore,* the play's "overt narrative ... tells of the downfall of two guilty lovers, but inscribed within this narrative is another telling of the destruction of love and trust in a world where such things are rare." While the play does not forgive the lovers' incest, it emphasizes the corruption of the society which condemns the lovers. Parma's commercial interests, personified by Donado and Florio, behave in a greedy and underhanded manner. The noble classes, represented by Richardetto, Soranzo, and Grimaldi, also appear vain and manipulative. Members of the clergy fare little better. Because of Grimaldi's court connections, the Cardinal hypocritically protects the Roman, who has just committed murder. At the play's end, when the Cardinal condemns the lovers' incest as sinful, he also takes their property.

All of these corruptions share one thing in common: they all prefer material gain to emotional connection. As merchants, nobles, clergy, or parents, they consistently value money over love. If marriage for money is a form of socially sanctioned prostitution, on what ethical basis can a hypocritical and mercenary society condemn true love that is incestuous? While the play certainly does not justify incest, it does challenge the conventional organization of social and sexual relations. Giovanni and Annabella's love may be called sinful and lust, but they willingly face social condemnation in order to consummate it. Through seriously flawed, in some ways they seem superior to those around them who never act for love but only for material gain.

Critical Essay #2

Brustein is one of the best-known theatre critics of the late twentieth century. In this essay, he reviews a 1992 production of Ford's play. While finding that there is much to recommend in the production, the critic ultimately finds fault with director Joan Akalaitis's efforts to contemporize the play.

JoAnne Akalaitis's first production as the New York Public Theater's artistic director displays her virtues in abundance□alas, the defects of those virtues too. Her version of John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* is undeniably terrific to look at. Set in Fascist Italy during the' 30s, the production has a design by John Conklin that proves to be the best performance on stage□a compound of futurist and surrealist elements that ravish your eye while demonstrating how easily art can become a slave to tyranny. As interpolated cries of "Duce" fill the air and posters extolling God, Country, and Family materialize between the Roman arches of the stage, Conklin rolls out huge cutouts of a child's hands, anonymous nude women, and tearful faces inspired by de Chirico, Marinetti, Dali, and other artists of the time.

Akalaitis shows no squeamishness about exploring the sanguinary aspects of *'Tis Pity*□a repertory staple in Artaud's Theater of Cruelty. Her finest moment, along with the blinding of Putana, is the culminating blood bath, when Giovanni, arriving with his sister's heart impaled upon his dagger, participates in another three or four deaths, including his own. The stage is literally awash in gore, the impact so full of horror that, for once in the history of this play, the audience refrained from laughing.

She is less successful in extracting the theme of the work, which is offered as an object lesson in the brutalization of women by macho males (including Giovanni□who writes an anti-female obscenity in blood on the wall of Annabella' s room). Women are certainly treated badly in *'Tis Pity,* but so is everyone. Ford wrote this incestuous version of *Romeo and Juliet* less to make a feminist point than to demonstrate (years in advance of Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky) that when God is dead, anything is possible. The abnormal love of Giovanni and Annabella is about the only redeeming feature in a world of social, political, and religious corruption, and when he takes her life at the end, Giovanni is taking the only course left to him, monstrous though it is.

Missing from Akalaitis's interpretation is not only Giovanni's towering intellect (the Friar describes him as a "miracle of wit"), but his motivating narcissism. He loves his sister largely because she's his twin□as one commentator says, they make love in a mirror and take identical vows. As played by Val Kilmer, however, he is simply an edgy, sulky, shambling boy, while Jeanne Tripplehorn's Annabella, befitting her victim status, is too subdued. Neither of these characters evokes much pathos, though the greatness of the play lies in the way the playwright redeems their corruption from an even more corrupt time. Their last scene together has virtually no love, warmth, or reconciliation, when it should be breaking your heart. Because these are actors well trained for the stage (and not just for close-ups in *The Doors* and *Basic Instinct),* one has to conclude that Akalaitis has misdirected them, especially since virtually all the other roles□with the

intermittent exceptions of Erick Avari's Vasques and Jared Harris's Soranzo□ are indifferently performed. No one on stage reveals an interior life, and the comic scenes are execrable. "This part has been scurvily played," says one of the characters about another in the play, and he might have been indicting almost the entire cast.

Still, the event is well worth seeing just for the brilliance of its colors and the boldness of its approach. Akalaitis may be wrongheaded and reductive to make this great seventeenth-century classic conform to contemporary feminist views, but the force of her commitment and her remarkable imagination must compel respect. Much more thought, preparation, and sweat went into the making of this blood-soaked masterpiece than hasty opinions can do justice to.

Source: Robert Brustein, review of *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore in the New Republic,* Vol. 206, no. 19, May 11, 1992, pp. 32-33.

Critical Essay #3

Kramer reviews a 1992 production of'Tis Pity She's a Whore, *which updates the setting to Fascist Italy. The critic offers praise for the cast and production as well as for the director's interpretation of Ford's portrayal of male and female values.*

The production of John Ford's " *'Tis Pity She's a Whore"* that opened at the Public Theatre the first week of April, directed by JoAnne Akalaitis, is surprisingly engrossing. Like the production of "Pericles " that Michael Greif directed earlier this season, it features a company of capable actors, two able stars, a consistent vision of the play, and a couple of tour-de-force performances from actors in secondary roles. The stars in this instance are Val Kilmer and Jeanne Tripplehorn, who play the siblings Giovanni and Annabella□Giovanni being the young man who, against some of the best advice in Jacobean tragedy, enters into an incestuous relationship with his sister at the beginning of the play and, at the end of it, appears at a banquet with her heart on a stake.

Mr. Kilmer, who played Jim Morrison, the lead singer for the Doors, in Oliver Stone's movie of that title, also played a rock star in one of those Abrahams/ Zucker spoofs. An actor like that, who knows how to play a rock star's temperament□whether in earnest or in jest□as opposed to one who merely possesses a rock star's temperament (like the young actors in the Brat Pack school), isn't a bad bet to play a Jacobean revenge hero. Callowness and a deceptive air of durability are the key here, for Giovanni is Hamlet without a conscience or an intellect. Watching him in the grip of something larger and stronger than himself, we have to believe that he thinks he is in control.

In the case of Annabella, we have to believe that she could go from thinking incest unthinkable to thinking it no big deal, and in very short order. If Annabella is too degenerate or too simple, her seduction will fail to be interesting, and that's why it isn't a bad idea, either, to cast an actress who knows how to play a victim without playing a sap. Miss Tripplehorn, who appears in the controversial date-rape scene in the new slasher movie "Basic Instinct, " and who got browbeaten and slathered with Vaseline in the last John Shanley play at the Public, manages to seem both intelligent and vulnerable. Watching Mr. Kilmer come on to her, you feel that if he were your brother you'd put out, too.

Unlike Mr. Kilmer, Miss Tripplehorn has trouble with the poetry, but she makes intelligible a particular brand of female naïveté, which the play, especially in Ms. Akalaitis's production, proves to be about. Yes, Jacobean revenge tragedy amounts to little more than a seventeenth-century version of "Basic Instinct," but even cheap thrills command a subtext, and Ms. Akalaitis's production suggests that the subtext of Ford's play is the phenomenon we call sexual harassment□the process by which predatory men prevail with women by trading on the very customs and laws that make women feel safe. In Ford's play, women of all sorts (vulgar, innocent, elegant, corrupt) are turned against and unished for allowing themselves to be seduced□ punished by the very men who lured them into their beds or their confidence. What this production skillfully brings

out is that Giovanni's seduction and murder of Annabella□the play's paradigm for feminine trust elicited and betrayed□has more to do with sexual politics than with sex.

Ms. Akalaitis has updated the play to the Fascist Italy of the nineteen-thirties, to create the sense of an ossified, decadent, and repressive moral order, and in dealing with the violence she has opted for all-out realism, which is the only way to approach these plays. John Conklin's scenic design employs an idea of art-through-the-ages: a system of de Chirico archways, in which characters can eavesdrop or take shelter from the rain; sculpture fragments□a foot, an armless statue□that prefigure some of the violence; scenes in the Mannerist style appearing aloft behind a scrim; a Dadaist design on the cyclorama; and, here and there, surrealist distortions of humanity.

I liked Erick Avari's Alan Rickman turn in the Iago role, and Deirdre O' Connell' s Putana and Ross Lehman's Bergetto□particularly the way their performances marshalled contempt, affection, and pity. Less popular with me were the dumb-show wedding at the beginning of Act II and the poisoning scene□ two sequences that find Ms. Akalaitis up to her old pseudo-avant-garde tricks (twitching and slo-mo). I could also have done without Jan A. P. Kaczmarek's incessant electronic music and Daniel Oreskes' Mussolini impression, and without Jared Harris, who plays Soranzo□or, anyway, without his bluster and mannerisms and speech impediment. And Ellen McElduff' s portrayal of Hippolita as a raving, scheming villainess□which is how she is described□seemed at variance with Ms. Akalaitis's insightful interpretation: the whole point is that what the men say of the women and what we see of them are two different things.

Source: Mimi Kramer, "Victims," in the *New Yorker,* Vol. 68, April 20, 1992, pp. 78-79.

Critical Essay #4

In this essay, Hamilton examines a particular facet of Ford's play that she feels many critics ignore: the nature of the relationship between Soranzo and Annabella.

'Tis Pity She's a Whore (1633), John Ford's tragedy of brother-sister incest, is his best known work. Yet in the welter of commentary on the play, critics have ignored a puzzling taunt that the heroine flings at her newlywed husband. The situation is briefly this: in order to conceal the fact that she is carrying her brother Giovanni's child, Annabella has been compelled to marry the rake Soranzo. He knows nothing of her condition and is delighted at her sudden acceptance of his proposal. But Ford wastes no time in showing that the match is unhappy. In their first scene together after the wedding banquet, Soranzo comes in dragging Annabella by the hair, shouting insults and brandishing his sword. He describes her adultery in extravagant and graphic terms: she is a "strumpet, famous whore," entirely given up to her "hot itch and pleurisy of lust" (IV.iii.1-8; all quotations are from the Regents Renaissance Drama text, edited by N. W. Bawcutt). What enrages Soranzo is not only that he has purchased damaged goods but that he is the dupe chosen to conceal their true worthlessness: "could none but I/Be picked out to be cloak to your close tricks,/Your belly-sports?" (11.10-12). Now Annabella expects him to pretend to be "the dad/To all that gallimaufry that's stuff d/ In thy corrupted, bastard-bearing womb "(11.12-14).

But Annabella is undaunted. She tells him in no uncertain terms how little he means to her:

had not this chance fall'n out as't doth, I never had been troubled with a thought That you had been a creature...

It would be hard to think of a more devastating dismissal of Soranzo's human worth. Yet instead of stopping there, she adds with still greater scorn: "but for marriage,/I scarce dream yet of that" (11.46-49). This is an odd thing to say to one's legal spouse, and it points up a larger problem of interpretation: how has Soranzo discovered the truth? Annabella is obviously pregnant; a bit later in the scene, the lewd servant Vasques marvels at the "quickness" of her "stomach's" swelling (11.169-72). But since the marriage took place so soon after Annabella realized her condition, why doesn't he assume that the child is his? One explanation is the technical one that the time scheme of the play is indefinite; there is no sure measure of how many months pass between II.vi, when the incestuous love is apparently only a few days old, and III.ii, when Annabella feels the first symptoms of pregnancy. A more intriguing possibility is that Annabella and Soranzo have never consummated their marriage. In fact, Annabella's taunt makes sense only if she is equating "marriage" with consummation. What is clearly implied is that out of revulsion or spite, Annabella has not kept her marriage bargain.

A likely setting for the quarrel is just after Annabella has refused Soranzo once again□he enters "unbrac'd." In his notes to the Penguin edition, *John Ford: Three*

Plays, Keith Sturgess reminds us that this term usually signified "mental turmoil," but he too thinks that in this case it is meant to indicate that Soranzo has just gotten out of bed (p. 369). He even speculates that Ford originally intended this scene to take place on the wedding night, although he notes the problems in chronology that this reading would entail. In any case, it is at this point that Soranzo is struck for the first time by his bride's swollen shape. He has put up with a good deal from her. Vasques recalls her "scurvy looks," and "waspish perverseness and loud fault-finding, " all of which, he claims, Soranzo bore meekly (11.166-69). The discovery of Annabella's infidelity wounds Soranzo at his most vulnerable point: his pride of possession. He has purchased a "most precious jewel" (IV.i.10) perversely determined to shine only for another man's pleasure.

Source: Sharon Hamilton, "Ford's *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore"* in the *Explicator,* Vol. 37, no. 4, Summer, 1979, pp. 15-16

Adaptations

The 1973 film version by Giuseppe Patrone Griffi, released by London's Miracle Films, stars Oliver Tobias. While not an entirely faithful adaptation of the play, the film does retain the spirit of Ford's original.

In 1962, BBC radio's Third Programme presented a radio version of the play.

The BBC produced a second radio adaptation on Radio 3 in 1970.

Roland Joffe directed an adaptation of the play for BBC2 television in 1980. Joffe's adaptation portrays Giovanni and Annabella, somewhat sympathetically, as rebels and condemns the hypocrisy of the mercantile, courtly, and religious society in which they live.

Topics for Further Study

Ford's play can be read as a commentary on the corruption of the court and courtiers of his time. Analyze the play's themes and characters in the context of late-Renaissance history. What do you believe Ford is saying about the politics of early-seventeenth century Britain? About contemporary kingship? Love? Ethics?

While it seems to some readers that Giovanni and Annabella freely choose to consummate their incestuous love, others believe□as does Giovanni himself□that they are fated to do so. Do you believe the lovers actions to be the result of free will or determinism? Cite evidence from the play to support your position.

While some may condemn the lovers' actions, it is possible to partially sympathize with their plight. After all, they seem to exist in a world without ethical values: family, court, and church seem corrupt and greedy. In a world without ethics, where can individuals go to decide what is right and wrong, how to live their lives?

The case can be made that Ford's dramatic literary style resembles the baroque style evident in the fine arts of the period. Research of the art history of the time will reveal many examples of these stylistic resemblances. You might begin with artists like Bernini, Carvaggio, and Gentileschi. Compare their visions with Ford's.

How do Ford's representations of incest compare with contemporary accounts? You might research psychologists or sociologists working with sexually abused children and compare their experiences with those related by Ford. In what ways does he present an accurate picture? What important details does he omit?

Compare and Contrast

1633: The wealthy have more access to official outlets of justice like the law courts than the poor. Wealth is no guarantee of power, though, and court politics play a significant role in who receives punishment for which crime. For the poor, riots offer the most popular means of protesting issues like rising food prices or rent. Since Britain will not have a police force until the mid-nineteenth century, vigilantism and revenge are popular avenues to justice.

Today: Revenge still remains a prominent theme in popular books and films, particularly those featuring a vigilante hero or heroine. Generally, however, most people tend to believe in institutional justice, expecting that the courts will decide on issues of crime and punishment. This in part accounts for the popularity of films and television shows about police departments or lawyers.

1633: The church did not officially define and condemn incest until the thirteenth century, but because large families shared small quarters and often beds, incest still occurred. In Britain, however, as many as 60% of the boys and 75% of the girls between puberty and adulthood grew up living with employers, relatives, or family connections rather than with their parents. This may have been one way of minimizing the temptation to commit incest.

Today: Incest is viewed as a form of child sexual abuse often related to broader family problems. Most sexual abusers were themselves abused as children; while as adults they may be sexual predators, as children they were victims. This does not mitigate their offense, but it does help psychologists treat sexually abused children in hopes of helping them avoid abusing their own children when they become adults.]

What Do I Read Next?

Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1594) tells the tragic tale of a gifted man who rejects social and moral boundaries and ends in destruction. In the same way that Giovanni flaunts social mores and commits incest with his sister, Faustus sells his soul to the devil in exchange for forbidden knowledge and power. Both plays critique the ideal of Renaissance individualism; in both, excessive independence and intellectual pride lead to death.

Mathilda (written in the nineteenth century but first published in 1959) a short novel by *Frankenstein* author Mary Shelley, also treats the incest theme boldly, though the act itself remains unconsummated. The novel tells the story of a father whose wife dies and who begins to have erotic feelings for his daughter, who reminds him so much of his dead wife. Fearing he may succumb to temptation, he leaves the daughter and dies.

Director John Sayles offers another representation of incest in his 1995 film *Lone Star. Sayles tells the story of policeman investigating a murder which may have* been committed by his father, a former police officer. Here, though the incest is consummated, its significance becomes symbolic of relationships between the United States and Mexico.

Other Renaissance revenge tragedies. These plays, as their name suggests, begin with a deed□a crime or injustice□which must be revenged. The most famous of these are Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy,* though there is also what critics call the "Tragedy of Blood" seen in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi,* and *The White Devil.*

Further Study

Leech, Clifford. *John Ford,* Longmans, Green, 1964.

Leech usefully situates Ford's dramatic achievement within the historical context of the Jacobean and Caroline theatre traditions. He sees Ford as influenced by Fletcher and earlier dramatists, and identifies a debt to Queen Henrietta Maria's cult of Platonic Love.

Oliver, H. J. *The Problem of John Ford,* Melbourne University Press, 1955.

Offering a fine overview, Oliver opens with chapters discussing Ford's times, non-dramatic writing, and collaboration before spending a chapter on each of the major plays. A good place to begin research.

Roper, Derek. Introduction to *'Tis Pity She's a Whore,* Manchester University Press, 1997.

This is an excellent edition of the play, with extensive notes and scholarly apparatus, a twenty-two page introduction, and a bibliography for additional research.

Sensabaugh, G. F. *The Tragic Muse of John Ford,* Benjamin Blom, 1944.

Sensabaugh's influential work reads Ford's drama in the context of Renaissance thinking about ambition, science, and individualism. Particularly good are his discussion of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and his ideas about humour psychology.

Stavig, Mark. *John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order,* University of Wisconsin Press, 1968.

Stavig offers strong introductory chapters on Ford's world and ideas, with a chapter on each of the major plays, including *'Tis Pity She's a Whore.* Stavig relies on Burton and other sources for outlining a series of character and personality types, which he believes appear in Ford's dramas.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of DfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of DfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in DfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

DfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Drama for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Drama for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from DfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from DfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Drama for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Drama for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

Editor, Drama for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535